LILITH

WINTER 1995–96 THE INDEPENDENT JEWISH WOMEN'S MAGAZINE V. 20, N. 4 $4.50

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VOLUME 20, NO. 4

LILITH

WINTER 1995-96

LILITH is named for the legendary predecessor of Eve who insisted on equality with Adam. After the Holy One created the first human being, Adam, the Holy One created a woman, also from the earth, and called her Lilith. Lilith said: "We are equal because we both come from the earth. . . ."
(From *The Alphabet of Ben Sira*, 23a-b)

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by Sandell Morse
When her Jewish son's Mayflower girlfriend draws him away from his tribe, the author suddenly wonders, "What was in my head when I hung up Christmas stockings for them when they were kids?" So what's Nu? Our children, as always, are our best teachers.

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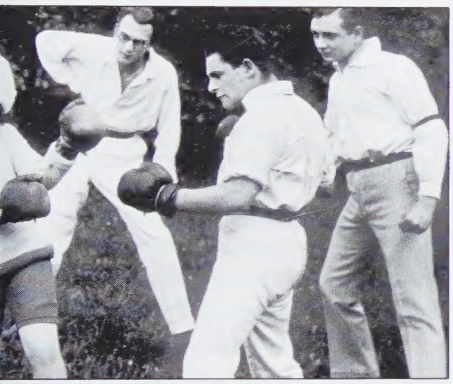
by Eve Sicular
"Trouser roles" aren't just the property of Marlene Dietrich and



Julie Andrews. Read here about Molly Picon's popular crossdressing—and what the droll, surprisingly subversive world of Yiddish film reveals. What's gender anxiety got to do with Jewish anxiety?? Lots.

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by Jean Shikman
"I may not have room in the apartment, but I have room in the heart." LILITH kicks off a new occasional column—Altruists—with an account of the adoption, 50 years ago, of a Jewish war orphan (the first child survivor to make it to America). Dina Rom's courageous, empathic, working-class "Mom," Frieda Shikman, is still doing good deeds at 88.

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by Rachel Kadish
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ABOUT THE COVER
Molly Picon, in New York stage production of 'Bublichki', 1937.
COURTESY OF YIVO INSTITUTE FOR JEWISH RESEARCH
DEBBIE FRIEDMAN PHOTO BY THOMAS S. ENGLAND

FROM THE EDITOR

Certain behaviors offer emblems of an era; flappers and Jazz Age America are one example. Yiddish films give us another, via the crossing of gender lines exemplified by Molly Picon's guy roles. Beyond Marlene Dietrich and the "Yentl" story, audience responses to this woman in men's (or boys') clothing reveal the attitudes—and anxieties—of Jews in Europe and America in the 1920's and 30's.

As it was with Yiddish film then, so it is with Jewish women's music now. We're learning something valuable about ourselves from the ways we respond to the outpouring of Jewish folk/pop music composed and performed by the more than three dozen women profiled in LILITH's roundup article on page 18. We have, it would seem, a pressing need for the joyous Jewish expressiveness, and the communal drawing-together that so many of these songs give us. The immediate sing-along response to Debbie Friedman's original compositions (for the New York feminist seders created by Ma'yan, the Jewish Women's Project), to her song for the months of the Hebrew calendar (a Rosh Chodesh waltz, actually, presented at the recent Conference on Alternatives in Jewish Education), or her now-normative chant for healing (*Mi sheh beyrakh,* which aroused a pretty straight crowd of 900 people last November in Boston at the General Assembly of the Council of Jewish Federations) demonstrates that diverse audiences are ready to tap into Jewish themes, sources and history through Jewish women's music-making.

While students and their parents and grandparents hear these sounds (and see the films), harder to reach is the elusive twentysomething generation. This is a time in the lives of young adult Jews which I've come to characterize as The New Latency—a period when the Jewish components of their identity—and their practice, certainly—lie dormant. "Settling down" later than any earlier generation, they nevertheless are making major decisions about their lives as Jews, wittingly or unwittinlgy: with whom to associate? where to live? whom to have as colleagues and as friends? And how to spend money and free time?

To find out as much as possible about what Jewish activities interest the Jewish twentysomethings around us, LILITH, in collaboration with Ma'yan, has gathered together a group of young Jewish adults to evaluate programs offered by Jewish organizations, to plan their own events and invite their peers to participate in them, and to help Jewish institutions shape programming more effectively to reach this age group, usually so hard to locate. The project has been made possible by special Jewish continuity funds provided by New York UJA-Federation. If you would like to know more about the project (the results of which will be published in LILITH from time to time), OR if you know of twentysomething Jews living in the New York area with whom we should be in touch, please send their names and addresses to me at LILITH, 250 West 57, New York NY 10107.

Susan Weidman Schneider

CALL FOR INFORMANTS:

For an upcoming story on partnerless Jewish women who choose to become parents, LILITH seeks informants. If you, as an unpartnered person, became the parent of an adopted or biological child (or if you considered doing so, but ultimately did not; or if you're currently in the question), we would love to talk with you. Please contact Susan Schnur at LILITH, 250 W. 57th Street, Suite 2432, NY, NY 10017. Phone: 212-757-0818. Fax: 212-757-5705. E-mail: lilithmag@ aol.com.

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LETTERS

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inist Resolve

oved Shulamith Reinharz's owerful piece on Manya nohat [Fall 1995]. I joined aShomer HaTzair as a child, e 1950's; no one ever told us ut this bold, magnificent, emporary heroine. Learning t her strengthens my femi- esolve.

lso thanks to Susan dman Schneider for the unt of her daughter Yael's Mitzvah at and near the el, with the assistance of nen of the Wall. This is our m, manifested--almost. To icipate in this ongoing gle for women's equality at salem's Western Wall now in th year, please send your -exempt) check to Rabbi ene Ferris, International mittee for Women of the , Inc., 215 Hessian Hills Rd., on, NY 10520.

Phyllis Chesler
Brooklyn, NY

gi-comic Blooper

LITH's excerpt of my *Book of Blessings* [Fall 95] contains some errors: speci- fically, the replacement of ells" by "swells" in the th line of my *Sh'ma.* (Isn't it zing how a single consonant make the difference between mnity and purple prose?) and mislabeling of the masculine feminine versions of sing the Beloved (in both Hebrew text and the sliteration). The unfortunate g is that these bloopers will be undetectable as such to many people (I have a tragi-comic vision of lesbian couples now using completely male language to bless each other). Because the book is not out yet (and won't be out for several months), and because LILITH is the first (the only!) place to run these excerpts, and because my *Sh'ma* is the single most important (and probably most controversial, hence most quotable) prayer in the book, I fear that these errors will be reproduced and even codified if they are not nipped in the bud. Could LILITH make a suitably prominent correction in its next issue, reprinting the text of a least the opening four lines of the *Sh'ma*?

Hear, O Israel—
The divine abounds
everywhere
and dwells in everything:
the many are One.

Marcia Falk
Berkeley, CA

Reality Checkbooks

I use Susan Weidman Schneider's pieces on "Jewish Women's Philanthropy" [Winter and Fall 1993] in a number of ways. I have used the pieces to do a reality check with women's solicitors, with major givers who are women, with solicitors of women's gifts, and one-on-one when I solicit gifts personally.

Second, I use the pieces with men who desperately need this information and the sensitivity to deal with it appropriately.

In our own community our annual Federation campaign has declined dramatically because of severe economic circumstances. A ray of hope has been our women's division, which has made women's *tzedakah* an honored norm. The caring and involvement of women beyond only writing a check is extraordinary, and much needed.

Cindy Chazan
West Hartford, CT

Eat Your Manna!

Not so fast! Cleaning one's plate [Summer 1994] and not wasting food may be a hangover from the Depression or the *Shoah*; and it may be neurotic. But among some Orthodox Jews it is customary not only to clean one's plate but to gather the crumbs around one's plate and eat them before *Birkat Ha'mazon*. Among Hassidim this has been raised to a ritual when students and admirers literally gather the crumbs from their master's table and eat them. I think the origin is that blessed food must not be thrown into the trash. Or it may be some commentary on the manna that had to be finished. Anyhow. The mothers and grandmothers who advocated clean plates may simply have been carrying on a tradition whose origins they had forgotten, or never knew. Wonderful issue, by the way.

Lili Krakowski
Constableville, NY

On E-mail

I write from Israel about Rabin's funeral. From what I saw, the prime minister of Turkey, speaker of the German Bundesdag and Queen of Holland were the only women who were not there as "wives of." The ceremonies highlighted the centrality of men in our society. All those who eulogized were men, except for the granddaughter. Hers was a private voice. Leah Rabin was perfect as widow--the woman who always stood by and behind her husband and whose total life was devoted to him and creating a home for him and their children.

I was touched by that last scene before the murder--Rabin leaving the stage--he stops and looks where is his wife Leah. He wants her by his side. She is clearly very dear to him. Leah and Yitzchak had met when they were both in the Palmach. She told a group of women who gathered at her home--I among them--a few years ago that Rabin had suffered as a child because his mother, active in the political life of the country, was rarely home. He wanted a wife who would be a full-time homemaker, and she agreed to that role.

At the vigil before the funeral a TV camera asked a man in army uniform, "Does this strengthen you as a soldier, as a parachutist?" "As a person" came the reply. For him, being strengthened as a human being was what this was all about.

And what are the implications for women? I think they have the potential to be tremendous. Rabin's murder has delegitimated staying silent over acts that endanger democracy and weaken the moral fabric of society. I hope women will take courage from this and be more empowered to speak up.

Dafna Izraeli
Tel Aviv

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KOL ISHAH

"WOMAN'S VOICE." TRADITIONALLY, THE VOICE OF THE JEWISH WOMAN W
NOT TO BE HEARD IN PUBLIC, LEST IT AROUSE MEN. NO MORE. THESE PA
ARE MEANT FOR NEWS ABOUT JEWISH WOMEN, IN OUR OWN STRONG VOIC

MUSEUM *SHANDE*: WOMEN ARTISTS PAINT BACK!

In 1979, Israel's Museum of the Jewish Diaspora altered a historical painting by removing the women from a synagogue scene [LILITH, Summer 1994]. Two Jewish women artists are responding with a controversial new installation, "Erased Out Of Herstory."

The original painting by Mauricio Gottleib, "Jews Praying in a Synagogue on Yom Kippur," which shows the men in the front of the synagogue in *tallitim* and the women behind them, overlooking the scene, hangs in the Tel Aviv Museum. In the Diaspora Museum's reproduction, the women have been replaced by a wall. This was done in order to, in the words of Chief Curator Joel Cahen, "accentuate the figures in the foreground...."

Due to public pressure, the museum has recently covered the painting so that it is not actually on display. However, it has been neither removed from the gallery nor replaced with an accurate reproduction.

That a museum, whose job it is to educate people about art and about history through art, feels it has the right to alter artwork, raises many questions about freedom of expression, artistic integrity, and

New artwork spotlights museum's carelessness. Detail of quilt above.

a museum's responsibility to the artist.

"Feeling doubly insulted as artists and as Jewish women," say Leslie A. Golomb and Louise Silk, of Philadelphia, "we decided to create an art piece to help bring the issue into the public eye." "Erased Out of Herstory" is an impressive work, made up of a curtain which hangs from ceiling to fl 10 empty folding chairs behind it, signed petitions to The Diaspora Muse demanding that it correct it's display. As artists describe their work, "the curtain constructed from a fabric silk-screened the original painting. The men are cut pieced into many fragmented six poi stars, while the women form the borde the construction. The curtain obstructs view of the 10 chairs and the petitions."

Golomb and Silk hope that their p will help to capture the attention of a la audience. "Seeing controversy visuall an art context can be much more powe than a newspaper article or a petition. want to do our part to correct the muse very negative statement of respect women and artists."

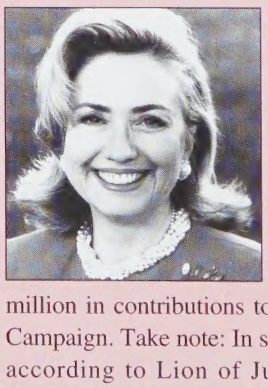
"Erased Out of Herstory" is availab travel. For details, contact the art directly at (412) 361-1158, fax (412) 5342. To demand that the Diasp Museum rectify this situation, con Sheila Decter, AJC Commission Women's Equality, 126 High Str Boston, MA, 02110

—Karen Be

THE LIONS OF JUDAH ROAR: JEWISH WOMEN DONORS MEET INSIDE THE BELTWAY

The fact that Hillary Rodham Clinton sat spellbound through a long speech by Rabbi David Hartman of Jerusalem—and didn't simply arrive at the last minute to address an audience of 1,100 women donors to the United Jewish Appeal—should suggest the power that the "Lion of Judah" women are perceived to have in Washington. "Lions" are women who give $5,000 to $50,000 annually to UJA, and each sports a gold lion brooch as evidence of her contribution.

The Lions, who span the age spectrum, announced at the conference $55 million in endowments to the UJA, and more than $11



Hillary Clinton at the Lion of Judah Conference

million in contributions to the 1996 Annual Campaign. Take note: In some communities, according to Lion of Judah Conference Chair Susan Stern, women's contributions make up between one-third and one-half of all the UJA money raised.

In addition to Hillary Rodham Clinton (who wove into her own remarks sev seamless references to Hartman's spe and Al Gore, five women senators and a of incumbents and fundraisers from parties came to speak and to pitch their political wares. "There are plenty of pl they could go to speak to women money, like a country club," said the Chi lawyer sitting next to me at the ban dinner one night during the conference. reason they're all making an effort to c here is that these are women with mo who also care about issues. It's not jus money itself, but our willingness to spe on causes that are important to us."

—Susan Weidman Schn

ON CAMPUS:
POWERFUL ACTS OF JEWISH FEMINISTS AT BROWN UNIVERSITY

As March approaches, thoughts at Brown University turn to women's struggle for equality and recognition, and moreover, our plans for Women's History Month. Two years ago, student yelet Cohen of Kol Ishah, Hillel's minist group, conceived the idea of ewish Women's Week, a week of rograms during March devoted to elebrating Jewish women, our culture nd our spirit.

Last spring, a group of us put together he Second Annual Jewish Vomen's Week which onsisted of 10 programs cluding a service project, an terfaith discussion with the hristian women's group, and forum on Jewish women's articular speech patterns with rown professor Barbara annenbaum. The opening vent was a feminist *Kabbalat habbat* service followed by a iscussion led by Connecticut ollege professor of Religious tudies, Judith Romney Vegner. Since Jewish Vomen's Week fell on Purim, e invited Gabi Lev of the erusalem Theatre Company o perform her interpretation f the story featuring our fave women, ashti and Esther.

All these events, however, were only uilding to the culmination of the week: ur Saturday night event, the Second nnual Jewish Women's Cultural elebration entitled ACTS OF POWER, here we ourselves exhibited our trength and talent as Jewish women. An vening of performances of poetry, song, ance, music and drama by Jewish omen from all circles of the Brown ommunity, it was a unique occasion for ewish women on campus to feel omfortable expressing both the female nd the Jewish parts of our identity.

The title of the event, ACTS OF OWER, was drawn from a commentary n the Book of Esther. Although at rown we weren't performing acts for the sake of our lives and our people, we did feel as courageous as Esther—self-expression rarely finding a forum as accepting as the one which we had created. Over 175 audience members, male and female, Jewish and non-Jewish, sat by candlelight at cloth-covered tables and enjoyed food and acts as varied as a comic feminist rewriting and performance of "Matchmaker, Matchmaker," a southern fiddler, and an Israeli folk dance.

As organizers, we made a concerted effort to include those women who were not affiliated with Hillel but often expressed their Judaism through other venues. The evening began with Olivia Schanzer, a creative writing concentrator, reading her own poetry in English and Yiddish and the work of the Yiddish poet Anna Margolin. Amy Sohn (who later delivered the commencement speech at Brown University graduation using the same material she spoke about that evening) moved me to tears as she shared reflections on her senior thesis. She spoke of her grandmother's experience at Pembroke College (the women's college at Brown until they merged in 1971) and the silent discrimination she and other Jewish women endured as Jews in an institution from which they gained insight and education despite the obstacles they faced. Her research into the stories of Jewish women at Pembroke (in the first half of the century) gave us, students of the '90's, insight into our own position at an institution where we are welcomed (quotas now a discarded practice), but where patriarchy still reigns, where the Board of Trustees is overwhelmingly white Christian males, and where the school emblem displays a cross.

Other rich talent of the evening included a one-act play written for a play writing class by Jennifer Zwiebel, which was a contemporary commentary on the talmudic character of Bruria. Three women with a common love for performance and Judaism were thrilled to have the exceptional opportunity to combine these passions and perform Jennifer's emotional and disturbing play.

Ayelet, Arielle, Kayla and I painted a mural as a backdrop. Here, after the show, life imitates art.

The energy which filled the room was inspiring. One woman in the Israeli dance ensemble who had not been actively involved in Jewish life on campus said, "I haven't done anything Jewish since high school because I don't feel comfortable at Hillel. I'm so excited that I was invited to be a part of this. I hadn't realized how much I missed being in a Jewish environment." Her feeling was echoed by many.

Although the success of the evening, the sheer joy felt by spectators and participants alike would have been enough for us, as icing on the cake, in August, we received the Elie Wiesel Award for Outstanding Artistic Programming for the Campus Jewish Community.

So, what are YOU doing for Women's History Month this year? We'd love to help you plan a Jewish Women's Cultural Celebration on your campus or in your community. For information (from budgeting to where to buy table candles to how to recruit performers), contact me at LILITH (212)757-0818, or Ayelet Cohen at Brown University Hillel at (401)863-2805.

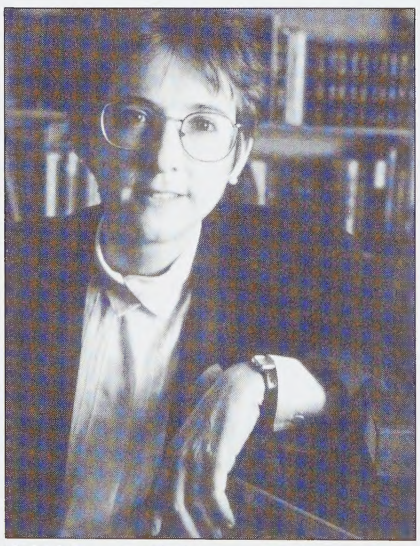
—Lisa Lepson

CONFERENCE OF GAY AND LESBIAN JEWS: ARE WOMEN'S ISSUES ON THE BOTTOM OF THE AGENDA?

Make no mistake, Jewish lesbians and gays have come a long way in a homophobic world. It's just that the road to a world without hatred and discrimination stretches on and on.

That seemed to be the consensus at the 14th International Conference of Gay and Lesbian Jews, held in New York City last July. The conference was hosted by Beth Simchat Torah, New York's gay and lesbian synagogue.

Approximately 600 participants from all over the US and 13 other countries came to network officially, shmooze informally, and attend the three days jam-packed with activities. The keynote address, given by knesset member Yael Dayan, was about the legislative gains made by lesbians and gays in Israel. The conference also included a film series, an art exhibition, and over 100 workshops,



Rabbi Sharon Kleinbaum led the opening program of the 14th International Conference of Gay and Lesbian Jews

conveniently divided into "tracks" by subject or area of interest. From this list, participants could choose anything from "Queer Jews On-line," to "Fighting Homophobia in the Jewish Community," to "When a Rabbi Comes Out."

Feminist workshops to choose from included "Jewish Lesbian Feminist Groups: Is There Anyone Else Out There?," "Today's Woman Taking Her Place in Synagogue Life," and "A Feminist Re-Vision of the Shofar and Rosh HaShana." Some of the female participants, however, felt that the woman/feminist track offered slim pickings compared to other tracks that focused on culture, identity, or theology.

One workshop, "Jewish Lesbian Feminism(s): Multiple and Shifting Identities," erupted into something of a gripe session once participants discovered that the leader of the workshop was heterosexual. "Where are the lesbians to lead this group?" asked one woman, chastising lesbians for not playing a larger role in determining the content of the conference. "We could have had so much more for lesbian feminists," she added.

Lisa (who did not want to use her last name) observed that many gay and lesbian gatherings tend to be male-centered. "It's like we come together first to fight oppression because of our sexual orientation and then we can worry about 'women's issues' afterwards," she says. "Just as in other types of political movements, women's struggle always gets pushed down to the bottom of the agenda."

Not everyone felt this way. Justyn Lezin, of Hopewell, New Jersey, said in response to these complaints, "Women today are taking on more and greater leadership roles, and we are feeling more confident about being included in previously male dominated areas. As this happens, our focus is shifting away from the need to carve out woman-centered spaces. I don't mean to say everything's perfect, but we've got room to move around now."

To others, the important aspect of the conference was the number and the unity of the people who came from around the world to participate. "Just being around so many Jewish lesbians and gays is amazing," said Dina Cohen, who came with five other women from a Jewish lesbian feminist group in Adelaide, Australia. "We don't know any gay Jewish men in Adelaide or of any other groups....To realize there are so many of us is heartening and exciting."

Helen Berenger, who came with a group from London, felt the conference would inspire her to become more involved in Jewish lesbian and gay activities back at home. "Over the years,

"IT'S LIKE WE COME TOGETHER FIRST TO FIGHT OPPRESSION AND THEN WE CAN WORRY ABOUT 'WOMEN'S ISSUES' AFTERWARDS."

just stopped doing things, and I want to make myself do things again." Hoping that attending this conference will put her back on track, she adds with a good-natured grin, "After all, this is a lot of money and I had to come all the way to New York."

Ultimately, lesbians and gays alike gathered not to complain about what their community lacks, but to celebrate how far they've come. Yael Dayan said in her keynote speech, "I hope you will no longer have a conflict in having to choose who to be. You were born Jewish and born gay and lesbian. It's not an 'either/or' situation."

To find out about the 15th International Conference of Gay and Lesbian Jews—Dallas, '97—contact Congregation Beth El Binah, 3615 N. Hall Street, Dallas, TX, 75219.

—Susan Joseph

VARENESS OF SEXUAL IARASSMENT MOVES AHEAD (SLOWLY) IN ISRAEL

ast year a new immigrant from the States was completing an internship at one of Tel Aviv's largest law firms. One evening the chief partner squeezed her behind and said, "Do you know what I love most about country? I can do this and get away n it." Unfortunately, many Israelis, uding the young lawyer in this story, l this true. Sexual harassment in the ieli workplace is nothing new, but ning how to deal with it effectively is ng the country some time.

'The awareness of sexual harassment is wing all the time, but we need much re," said Rachel Benzimen, Legal vocate for the Israel Women's Network organization which works to protect advance the rights of women in Israel). omen need to believe more in nselves."

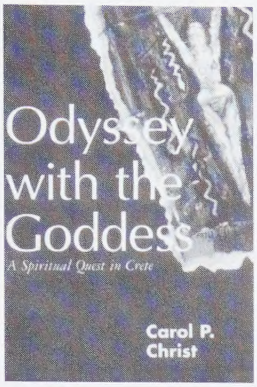
This, however, is not so easy to do in a iety which generally ignores women's nplaints and usually sides with the man ne position of power.

'Women don't speak out for a number of ons," Benzimen said. "They are afraid ome out because of what society will Many are vulnerable because they are gle parents and need the income, or they simply afraid to lose their jobs."

The Equal Opportunities Employment against discrimination in the workplace, ch includes a clause on sexual assment, was passed in 1988. Since , no sexual harassment cases have been ed in court. There are a number of cases were settled out of court, but many of m resulted in the resignation of the nplainant due to embarrassment and the tion of an uncomfortable situation.

'Amendments need to be made to make law more user friendly," said Miriam row of the Israel Women's Network, ch, together with MK Yael Dayan, is oying in the Knesset for improvements. cifically, they want to extend the six nth statute of limitations and expand the to include people in services such as

(continued on page 40)



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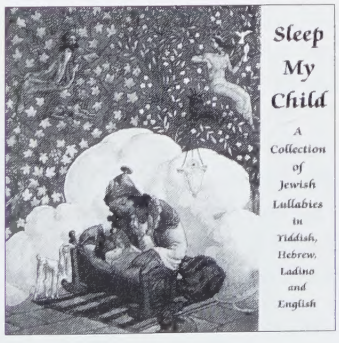

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the December Dilemma

What a mother learns about herself when her son struggles with an intermarriage

by Sandell Morse

One day, Richard, my oldest son, and I were eating in a Jewish delicatessen in Cambridge. "Look, Ma," he said, gesturing to the framed photo on the deli wall. What I saw was an old bearded man in *yarmulke* and *tallis*, a Torah resting on his shoulder, his eyes seeming to be full of joy and yearning.

"If I marry her, that's what I give up," my son said.

The "her" he was referring to was Rebecca, his girlfriend of a year and a half. When I first heard her name I thought, "Maybe." But it turned out she was Episcopalian, a woman whose family traced its roots back to America's earliest settlers. Her ancestors were achievers—powerful lawyers and doctors, owners of big companies and California vineyards. The family summered in a house that Rebecca's grandfather had built on a point of land in Northeast Harbor, Maine.

I imagined porches and steps leading down to a wide lawn, games of croquet, ocean waves breaking against a sea wall. Inside, I pictured ancestral portraits and samplers. Rebecca spent her Christmases in another house in another family compound on a bay in Florida. Tomorrow, Richard would be leaving to join them.

I liked Rebecca. Who wouldn't? Vivacious, dark-haired, athletic, smart, outspoken.

It was the power of her family I feared. They offered Richard success in life (if success means a well-paying job), patrician gatherings, skiing in Taos in the spring. They handed out plane tickets to current boyfriends and girlfriends as if they were lollipops. I felt angry. This was a family who could "steal" my son. I looked at the photo on the deli wall and thought of my maternal grandfather with whom I grew up, a man who *davened* wearing *tefillin* every weekday of his life.

"Why will you have to give this up?" I said, gesturing towards the portrait, suddenly conscious that neither one of us had felt comfortable enough to say the actual word: Judaism.

"She wants a commitment," he answered finally.

Growing up, I'd been taught by my father that being a Jew was no different from being a Christian. "It's a religion, that's all," he used to say. He was a German Jew, Reform, and, although he'd fallen on harder times, he regaled me with stories of his rich and prominent New York family. His mother, my grandmother, had married "up," but my grandfather died young, cheating my father of both family connections and inheritance. My father carved out his own success, though, combining the arrogance of the self-made man with the pride of the German Jew. Together the mix was devastating.

My mother, on the other hand, was the daughter of Orthodox immigrants (my *"davening"* side) who kept kosher and observed the Sabbath and holidays. My father did none of those things, yet we all lived together in the same house. Needless to say, I grew up with contradictions.

Outside the house there were contradictions, too. There I found that "otherness" which my father claimed didn't exist: signs in windows restricting Jews; invisible signs at the

left: Richard, Andrew and Douglas, Christmas, 1972. right: Douglas, Richard and Andrew, 1989;

"After I was married I myself put up a Christmas tree, fulfilling a childhood dream. Yet it also felt strange. Was this house with the Christmas tree mine?"

entrances of long drives leading to country clubs with wide lawns; once a close friend's surprised face: "I don't believe it, stop kidding. You're not Jewish, you couldn't be!"

I grew up in small towns where Jews were a minority. Mostly we stuck together. If a new girl moved into our neighborhood we asked, "M.O.T. (member of the tribe)?" I wondered if our sticking together was a response to growing up during post-War years. I remember thinking constantly about concentration camps, ovens, lampshades made of Jewish skin. When I read Anne Frank's diary, I cried and cried. I felt absolutely that that could have been me.

After my marriage, I realized that I didn't know what I really wanted in terms of being Jewish. My husband was Jewish in name only. Like my father's family, his stock was German-Jewish. Peddlers, they rose quickly in the business world, sent their sons to Harvard, and saw that their daughters married well. Though his prominent Boston family was descended from the founder of the city's largest temple, they no longer were members there—or anywhere. Like my paternal grandmother, I'd married "up," and later would pay the price in shame and self-hatred.

The first Christmas after my marriage, I bought a tree. My husband wasn't surprised; he'd grown up with one. And me? I told myself I was fulfilling childhood dreams. Looking back, though, I think I did it to be like everybody else. If all the windows in my neighborhood had lighted trees, casting shadows on the snow, mine would too. Yet when I turned the corner and pulled into my own driveway, I felt strange. Was this house with the Christmas tree mine?

Some years I added Chanukah to our Christmas celebrations; other years I didn't. As for other Jewish holidays, the only ones that concerned me were Rosh Hashana, Yom Kippur and Passover. Sometimes I celebrated them; sometimes I didn't. My sons were circumcised without prayers, and they weren't bar mitzvahed.

I looked at Richard across the deli table; tall, dark, heavily bearded. My husband is fair-skinned, a redhead before turning gray. His eyes are pale green. And me, my complexion is light, my eyes hazel, my hair, once light brown, now gray. Where did Richard get these swarthy looks? "Maybe you should be a rabbi," I said, apropos of nothing.

"Maybe."

"You know," I said, feeling a sudden flood of regret, "I never taught you enough about being Jewish."

"Are you kidding?" he answered. "All those stories about your Jewish family, about your grandmother. All those stories..."

Sandell and Richard with Christmas stocking, 1963.

My grandmother's house (where we all lived together) was yellow stucco, and it sat on a corner lot where peonies bloomed in the side yard, and grapes ripened on an arbor in the back. A family used to gather there: the matriarch Sarah; Abraham (her husband and first cousin); Irving (oldest son); Adele (Irving's wife); Gabe (second oldest son); Cereld (Gabe's wife); Harry (youngest son just home from the War); Helene (Harry's wife); Lillian (only daughter); Leon (Lillian's husband); and me, Sandell, daughter of Lillian, only child in this family.

I remember the table would be extended its full length and covered with a white cloth, set with dishes and crystal we used just once a year. I remember the shank bone, roasted egg, and horseradish root that my grandfather used to grate, tears streaming down his cheeks.

My grandmother would light the candles; my grandfather filled Elijah's cup. All year long I would smell grapes, turning to wine in wooden barrels in the basement.

My grandfather chanted the entire service in Hebrew, and even though I couldn't understand a word, the music seeped into my bones.

"Slow down, Abe," my grandmother would say.

"Where are you, Dad?" Uncle Gabe would ask.

I would open the door for Elijah, and as I stood facing the night, I felt the brush of an angel's wing.

Passover was the one celebration I carried out of my childhood and set down, more or less, in my marriage. I didn't change dishes as my grandmother did; I didn't chop raw fish, but I did make chicken soup, and I did tell my children about Grandma Sarah's soup with yellow eggs and chicken feet floating to the top. I told them about Grandma Sarah's father, their great-great grandfather, a matzoh baker who left Russia and came to America specifically to bake the Passover matzohs for his *landsleit* in New York City. Every year he asked Gitl, his wife, to come to America. But the story goes that Gitl liked the farm in Russia.

It wasn't just the story of Moses leading the Jews to freedom that my family read each Passover. It was family history, too, I realized suddenly, sitting across the deli table from my son Richard. The story of our own Exodus. When I lit the candles and they burned in Grandma Sarah's candlesticks, I wove my own family's story into the ritual threads.

Outside the deli, the streets had frozen over with hardened snow. Richard walked beside me, stepping down off the curb.

"Matthew's coming to Florida, but he's not sure about Sally." Matthew was Rebecca's brother; Sally, Matthew's fiancee.

I thought about those plane tickets as plentiful as lollipops. I thought about Rebecca. If they married, would she change her name?

I thought about Richard's paternal great-great grandfather who took care of our name long ago when Maas became Morse. A change during immigration? At the suggestion of a wealthy benefactor? Both stories were family legend. What of Richard's middle name, Friedman, belonging to his paternal great-grandmother? A lovely woman who died a week after giving birth. Would Richard change that to Fred?

Back home, late that night, I awakened my husband. "Do you think they'll get married?" I asked him.

"How should I know?," he said.

"I want him to be Jewish." And, finally, I knew. I had said it. Not only did I want my son to be Jewish, I wanted to be Jewish too.

Richard was moving to Philadelphia to begin graduate school, and I wouldn't see him again until spring. I wondered, how much of what I was feeling was displaced, a mother's loss? How much was really connected to Judaism? I thought of my mother-in-law. "What does it matter?" she had said. "Rebecca is some catch."

I thought about interfaith couples I knew, about children who are part black, part white, part Asian, part Catholic, part Jewish. I thought about tolerance, about loving people for who they are. It's what I had preached at home—equality, justice. I thought about the Passover injunction to welcome the stranger at our table. Wasn't Rebecca that stranger?

A few months later Richard called. "We broke up," he said. "I couldn't do it."

I held my tongue. "I'm sorry," I said finally, "and I'm glad."

"I know."

We talked, and then I sat in my living room, looking out at my snow-filled garden, thinking about being young, and about the sadness of losing love. I thought too, suddenly, about another family story. When my Uncle Irving—once, long ago—started dating a minister's daughter, my Grandma Sarah, without a moment's waste, picked up the entire family and moved them to a new town—one with a synagogue and a large Jewish community.

Richard was in Philadelphia. Wasn't there a nice Jewish girl, somewhere in that city, waiting for my son? □

Sandell Morse has published short stories in many literary magazines, including Iris, Green Mountains, Review, Calliope, and Ploughshares. She lives in York, Maine.

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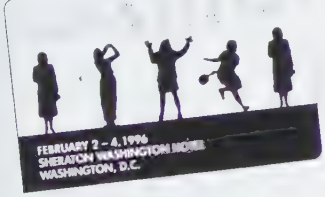

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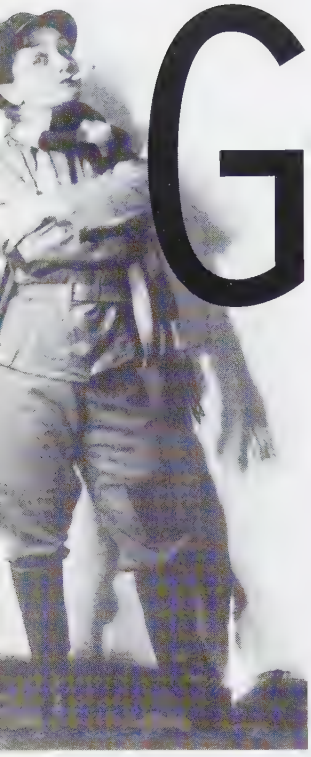


COURTESY OF YIVO INSTITUTE FOR JEWISH RESEARCH

BY EVE SICULAR

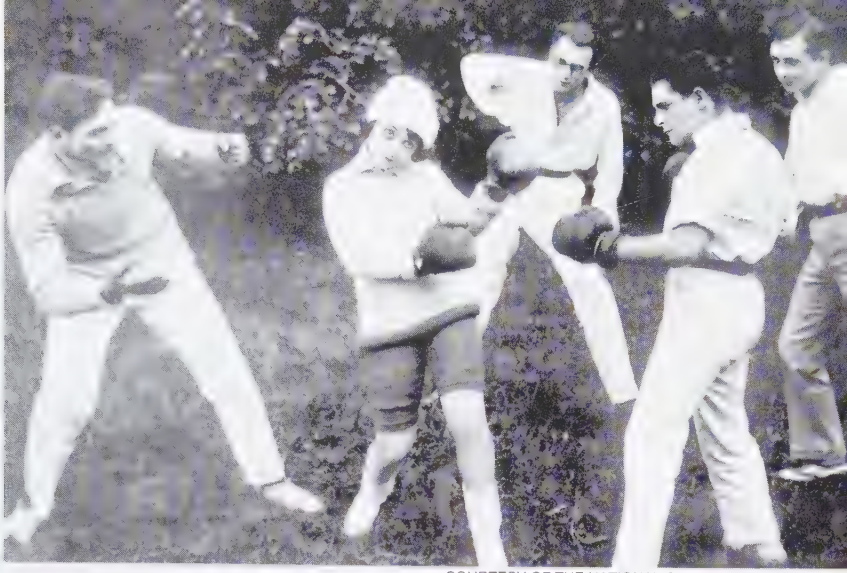
Once upon a time in Manhattan at The Museum of Modern Art, I was at my job, compiling program notes and watching audiences watch old Yiddish films. I was working on a major retrospective show, the 1991-92 "Yiddish Film: Between Two Worlds" series co-sponsored by the National Center for Jewish Film. The biggest draws were The Dybbuk *and* Yiddle With His Fiddle, *both full of gender ambiguities and good music. Somewhere between the labyrinthine back ways to the projection booths, the elevator rides to the film department office, and my subway rides home to the East Village, I began to appreciate Yiddish films in ways I would have never expected.*

Since then, I have written and lectured extensively on various aspects of subtext in Yiddish films, and continue to learn more every time I show my collection of video clips or speak with someone who worked on one of the original productions. One constant response from my audiences is widespread fascination with Molly Picon, who played the title role in Yiddle With His Fiddle *among other classics. Picon's gleeful performances were a unique phenomenon, given how rarely women in Yiddish films were depicted as more than some man's mother, wife, daughter, sister or sweetheart. Almost anyone lucky enough to have seen Picon in person wants to talk about her effervescent magic onstage.*

Molly Picon's characters often combined rowdiness and modesty, a formula well-suited to audiences trying out new roles in a world quickly dropping its familiar social restraints. In this climate, the actress was given license to impersonate boys—but not men. She maintained a kind of worldly innocence, daring enough to delight viewers, but never going too far. Latter-day comparisons to characters such as Yentl or Victor/Victoria recognize the fascination common to stories of women 'passing' in a man's world. But we should also take into account the notably untransgressive nature of the parts Picon chose to play, in which questions of her character's sexuality came up only obliquely if at all. Molly Picon's butchy stuff was mild even for her own period, if we remember any of the wilder female-to-male non-Yiddish entertainers.

But if Picon's roles placed implicit limits on her power and freedom, they also reflected the shifting sense of power and freedom among Jews during the interwar decades. Calibrating what levels of risk would pass for entertainment reveals a close connection between rising Jewish anxieties and the changing ways our tomboy heroine was presented onscreen.

Of all the figures of the Yiddish entertainment world, none was more widely beloved than the feisty Molly Picon. For over fifty years, this diminutive dynamo delighted fans as she sang, danced, scolded, swaggered, schemed, yearned, and did perfect wide-eyed doubletakes. And throughout her career in both Yiddish theater and films, whether in New York, London,Warsaw, or Buenos Aires, Molly made box office hits with her signature *shtik*: male drag. From the stages of New York's Second Avenue to the Yiddish-lan-



Sparring flapper 'Mollie' captivates the gym in a scene from *Ost und West*, 1923.

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guage silver screen, Picon's trademark crossdressing topped the list of music, scripts and general mischief custom-made to showcase her talents.

Picon's transvestite appeal came from her particular charisma, of course, but the popularity of this type of performance spans many ages and cultures. Playing with the trappings of gender always contains some degree of the risque, and any performer able to create such a scene provides a vicarious thrill for spectators. But while such spectacles may be perceived as liberating and exciting, they also have the potential to scandalize and shock viewers. Molly Picon and her producers were clearly invested in what pleased their Yiddish fans; even Picon's most daring escapades never crossed into the realm of scandal. Her popularity did not derive from sexually provocative behavior, unlike the intriguing, sophisticated appeal of glamorous Hollywood androgynes. Stars such as Greta Garbo and Marlene Dietrich, contemporaries of Picon, challenged gender norms through highly sexualized cross-dressed roles. And, in films such as *Queen Christina* and *Morocco*, both enacted scenes with clear lesbian overtones: Garbo dressed in full swashbuckling regalia as she kissed her beloved Countess Ebba; Dietrich kissed a cabaret fan while wearing a tuxedo and top hat.

Yiddish films, by contrast, and Picon's vehicles in particular, were not going out of their way to transgress the boundaries of audience sensibilities. Compared to its 'mainstream' counterparts, Yiddish cinema was notably desexualized. And even onstage, while bawdy male (and female) impersonation thrived in European nightclubs and on American vaudeville circuits—fueling Broadway's so-called 'Pansy Craze' of the late 1920's—such risky material did not make the crossover into popular Yiddish culture. While in one exceptional instance, lesbianism was portrayed in a Yiddish drama, Sholem Asch's 1908 *Got Fun Nekome* ('God of Vengeance'), it was still a highly controversial piece when performed in the 1920's, and its content instigated theater closings in various cities where it played. In this context, it is quite significant that Molly Picon's "trouser roles" cast her as boyish, not mannish; while her repertoire included so many instances of putting on pants, these were fundamentally pranks rather than challenges to the sexual status quo. Picon rarely experimented with the male privilege that can come with wearing these clothes, and even then, only ever so tamely.

PICON'S ROLES AS BAROMETERS OF JEWISH ANGST

Picon's crossdressing roles were not static. In fact, they reflect very clearly the changing times in which they were made, when political and socio-economic transformations affected every facet of Jewish life. Within the context of an evolving Yiddish culture, the changing function of Molly Picon's 'gender-bending' is a fascinating microcosm of the changing nature of cultural anxieties and mores over the decades. Picon's earlier drag roles, which launched her as a star in the

IN OST UND WEST
DAUGHTER IN DRAG
DISCIPLINARY ACTION

Gender construction project: Handyman Froim (Leon Liebgold) and klutz Yidl (Molly Picon) illustrate the do's and dont's of Jewish manhood in *Yidl Mitn Fidl*, 1936.

early 1920s, were largely unapologetic romps with some eventual lessons in moderation. By 1936, her appearance in the girl-dressed-as-klezmer-boy role required excuses to be invented so that the plot may introduce Molly dressed as a reluctant *yingl*, longing only to be a *meydl* again. The shifting presentation of Molly's tomboy antics reflects first the *zeitgeist* of the Jazz Age, then the Great Depression; the specifically Jewish experiences of an immigration boom followed by restrictive American quotas; and, finally, the issues of ethnic identity as affected by the pressures of assimilation and anti-Semitism.

The interwar period of the 1920's and 30's was a time of tidal shifts in the Jewish worlds of Europe and America. The very possibility of stardom such as Picon's in the Yiddish-speaking community emerged as part of this era, when large-scale dislocation, urbanization and immigration were giving Jews from Eastern Europe and their descendants unprecedented freedoms and choices. The earlier transformations of the *haskole* (Enlightenment) movement had already opened the way for secular Jewish literature and theater, but the idea of women in the public eye as performers was still considered a *shande* well into the 20th century. Meanwhile the tradition of crossdressing on the Jewish stage, while it certainly had an ancient precedent in the Purim plays (*purimshpiln*), had been essentially only a one-way, male-to-female, once-a-year religiously sanctioned ritual involving men or boys playing both men's and women's parts. While women were allowed to witness Jewish men dressed as Vashti and Esther, the reverse did not pertain to performances done by any girls' *yeshives*. Clearly, all sorts of Old-World order had already been thrown into question to allow an act as unconventional as Molly Picon's to be considered popular family fare.

The 1921 show which launched Picon's career ensured that, from the beginning, her fame was linked to her performance in boys' clothing. *Yankele* featured Molly in the (masculine) title role wearing elaborate *yeshive bokher* and drummer-boy outfits. The play, written for Picon by her husband/manager and sometime co-star, Jacob Kalich, was characterized in her autobiography as 'the Yiddish Peter Pan.' Picon, who had been born in New York in 1898, was sent to Europe in this show to prove herself with the Yiddish audiences of Warsaw. Having made her theater debut at the age of 6, she was by this time a seasoned professional, but it was only after her triumphant run before Eastern European audiences that she could truly be considered a Yiddish star. This production was revived intermittently for more than a decade, as Picon toured it to enthusiastic houses as far off as South America.

While Molly Picon did not come from a theater family per se, as did many of the pre-eminent Yiddish actresses of this age, the professions of her mother—a dressmaker—as well as

I S C O V E R I N G H I S
H E F A T H E R T A K E S
E S P A N K S H E R .

Yidl's klezmer band helps the bride escape an arranged marriage. Yidl later expresses interest in her — but only as a potential rival.

perhaps her father—a tailor—certainly had their effect on her path. Picon's mother made many of the costumes in her stage wardrobe, and her costumes in turn 'made' many of Molly's roles. The crossdressed parts became perhaps less credible later in Picon's career, when she was already somewhat more *zaftig*, but by that time she had so endeared herself to her public in such parts that few let such details interfere with their enjoyment. Her androgynous *shtik* was closely connected with a perennially childlike stature. Even as an adult, Picon was well under five feet tall, and her scrappy underdog/upstart persona gave her the ability to appear rebellious and unthreatening at the same time. The rowdy waif routine seems to have contained the right chemical balance for all Jewish audiences — men, women and children—to identify with Picon's characters.

THE ROLLICKING TOMBOY ONSCREEN

Only two years after Molly took *Yankele* to Europe, she made her film debut in the silent Yiddish comedy *Ost und West* (*East and West*, Austria, 1923), co-starring with her husband and the film's American director, Sidney Goldin. And here, too, she puts on Hasidic drag. Molly is cast as the irreverent Mollie Brown. Playing a spoiled Jewish American flapper dragged along to the Old Country by her *allrightnik* father (Goldin), 'Mollie' changes into *yeshive* boys' clothing for one portion of the film. In other scenes, her tomboy tendencies show themselves through her behavior if not her attire: she practices on the punching bag she has packed along, struts around in her boxing gloves, and repeatedly puts up her dukes to intimidate the religious folk who try to interfere with her non-traditional ways. She flouts taboos basically for the fun of it: flirting brazenly with a roomful of *yeshive bokhers*; raiding the pantry on Yom Kippur, and landing a knockout punch on the cook who catches her in the act. Then, of course, there is the episode at her cousin's wedding party, where she disguises herself as a Hasidic boy. At this point, conformity is finally enforced: discovering his daughter in drag, even the thoroughly modern Mr. Brown (né Brownstein) undertakes disciplinary action—he spanks her.

While certain things had to be kept within bounds, *Ost und West* is clearly the product of a permissive, defiant, anti-nostalgic mood. In 1923, memories of the traditional Old World (the 'East' of the film's title) were far from idealized. American restrictions on immigration from Eastern Europe had not yet materialized (these were enacted three years later), and so links with the world of the *shtetl* did not as yet seem so brittle. Neither did the traditional centers of Ashkenazic life appear endangered as they would in ensuing decades. The Roaring Twenties were just getting underway, America was the Land of Opportunity, and the 'flickers', as silent films were then called, were still competing with vaudeville for their audiences. Picon uses slapstick moves to portray the brash

BUT KEEP THE GROOM
(NADN IS ALRIGHT, NOR DE

COURTESY OF THE NATIONAL CENTER FOR JEWISH FILM

Ost und West: **After making eyes at the local *bokhers,* the American visitor teaches them how to shimmy. Later she finally provokes her indulgent father by dressing as one of the boys.**

young daughter of an American big shot, bratty yet winning, the pampered offspring of an immigrant who has made good. Most of the film's jokes center on the clashes which erupt when old ways meet new, lampooning both the 'backward' *shtetl* Jews and the American parvenu. Eventually Mollie's defiance is tempered when one of her stunts goes too far and encounters the formidable force of Jewish marital law.

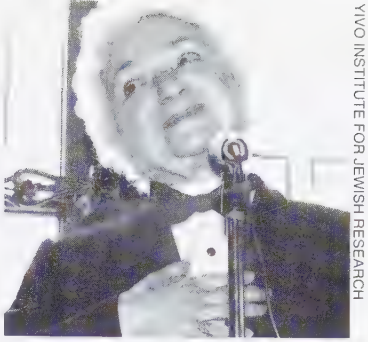
By the final reel of *Ost und West*, Picon's rollicking tomboy has been duly chastened and is happily married off to one of the hometown religious scholars (played by her real-life spouse, Kalich), but not before profoundly changing his outlook, too. He leaves the *shtetl* for cosmopolitan Vienna, shaves his beard, and gives lectures on 'Orientalism.' In the end, East and West settle in genteel Central European society, and everyone learns their lessons in moderation. Mollie's brash, butch ways are mollified. But her earlier defiance of authority, although eventually contained, is an example of what made good 1920's entertainment. 'Mollie,' like her audience, was primarily out for kicks.

"IF ONLY YOU WERE A BOY": CROSSDRESSING IN SERVICE OF FAMILY VALUES

By 1936, when *Yidl Mitn Fidl* (*Yiddle With His Fiddle*) was produced, Picon's character took quite another stance. Filmed on location in Depression-era Poland, in the shadow of the Third Reich, this picture is a musical comedy revolving around the dramas of a fragile, fragmented family and frustrated, mistaken-identity romance. Here transvestitism is even less of a transgressive element than in *Ost und West* even though, as Yidl, Picon spends almost her entire time onscreen dressed as a boy. The premise for her unfeminine apparel is that her dear old widowed father, evicted from their home, himself suggests that he and she could make a living on the road as musicians but for the idea of taking his daughter to places unseemly for a young woman: "If only you were a boy...." Whereas in the 1923 film, cross-dressing was a daughter's misbehavior for which her father spanked her, here as 'Yidl' she is actually obeying her papa; the poor man all but thanks her. While masquerading as his son, she is able to have all sorts of adventures (including one night of drinking in a tavern, the pretext for her tipsy gamin routine) but manages nonetheless to keep a *meydl*-next-door innocence, as well as a predisposition to self-sacrifice for the good of her family. She feeds her father, letting herself go hungry; maintains the burden of her disguise even though the man she loves rejects her, believing she is really a boy; and lavishes her frustrated affections on small, furry animals. By 1936, the point was not to challenge conventional Jewish gender norms or family values, but rather to reinforce them, according to producer/director Joseph Green. Indeed, the fundamentally unthreatening nature of Yidl allows her character to reinforce masculine/feminine polarity, illustrating one of the social instruction points on Green's agenda.

For all of Green's traditional imagery, though, there were some old-line cultural messages he was quite deliberately trying to undo and replace. The key subtext of *Yidl Mitn Fidl* is a conscious rejection of stereotypical images of the *goles yidn*, or Diaspora Jews, substituting instead the figure of a new, Model Jew. Thus the representation of Yidl (whose very name

N A V A U L T . ”
OSN SHTEL ARAYN IN SEYF.)
—FROM AMERICAN SHADKHN



COURTESY OF YIVO INSTITUTE FOR JEWISH RESEARCH

Still those boyish charms: Molly Picon in 1982, receiving a lifetime achievement award from the YIVO Institute.

means 'little Jew') as a high-strung, loquacious, neurotic, weak and apparently effeminate young man makes her character a perfect foil in the then-current debate over Jewish "fitness" versus so-called degeneracy. Social theories of ethnic and racial degeneration had been around long before the rise of Nazism, first proposed at the turn of the century and advocated by anti-Semites and Zionists alike—the idea that certain traits were characteristic to a people, and could possibly be bred or trained out. The filmmaker was trying to painlessly teach his audiences about desirable versus undesirable Jewish traits. Contrasted to the suspicious effeminacy personified by Yidl is the tall, handsome klezmer musician, Froim, who embodies everything Green recommends cultivating: clean-shaven, clean-cut, handy and athletic, Froim plays the straight man to Yidl's comical figure in more ways than one.

The issue of men casting off unmanly ways is portrayed here with frequent exhortations to masculinity, as well as many an oblique reference to homosexuality as its supposed opposite. Since the audience knows Yidl's secret identity, her failure to match up to virile ideals gives plenty of opportunity to bring up the problem while never actually having to show an effeminate, much less homosexual, Jewish male onscreen. Regular girl that she really is underneath, Yidl of course develops a crush on Froim. The jokes which ensue further construct Froim as the masculine, heterosexual paragon. He saves the helpless Yidl from drowning, but sensing the youth about to embrace him, Froim literally casts off the undesirable, dropping him/her back into the lake. (Degeneracy theories were also applied to queerness, of course.) And just to dispel any lingering notions of Jews as incapable of productive labor, Froim is shown in an otherwise gratuitous scene doing carpentry—not merely a fiddler, he can handle hammer and nails!—at which Yidl, naturally, is hopeless.

The film's resolution finds degeneracy cured—Molly/Yidl safely back in a dress, and the normalcy of heterosexuality declaimed. Onstage, the former Yidl speaks directly to the audience about the drawbacks of her gender-bending escapades. Asking if there could possibly be any explanation for same-sex attraction between two males, she says rhetorically, *"A yingl mit a yingl hot epes a tam?"* ['A guy with a guy—what sense does that make?']—perhaps implying, too, with *tam* as a double entendre, that such a thing would be in very strange taste.

Molly Picon continued to be remembered for her cross-dressing roles throughout her career. Even in 1982, when receiving a lifetime achievement award from New York's YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, she arrived in a stylish tux. Yidl Mitn Fidl *was, however, her last screen appearance in drag. But it was not the last time the Yiddish cinema envisioned a woman in 'masculine' garb. The subtly iconoclastic 1940 film,* Americaner Shadkhn *(*American Matchmaker, *USA) features an all-too-briefly-seen sister character, the sly and slangy Khavele (Elvie). From her first appearance onscreen, wearing an aviatrix outfit á la Hepburn and referring to Orthodox visitors as "the cowboys with the black hats," we understand that this is no nice Jewish character part. A screwball-comedy atmosphere places the film in its age of insecurity, where nothing is sure but uncertainty. The dialogue, as well as visuals and soundtrack, abounds with campy references (include thinly-veiled* feygele *jokes), and Elvie's running commentary holds nothing sacred. Asked if she is interested in marriage, Elvie replies,* "Nadn is alright, nor der khosn shtel arayn in seyf" *[Dowry's fine, but keep the groom in a vault].* □

Eve Sicular is former Curator of the Film & Photography Archives at the YIVO Institute and author of the article, "Beyond the Pale: The Celluloid Closet of Yiddish Film." *She is also drummer/bandleader of The Greater Metropolitan Klezmer Band.*

FINDING YIDDISH FILMS ON VIDEOTAPE

The Yiddish films *East and West, Americaner Shadkhn* and *Yiddle With His Fiddle,* as well as other Yiddish classics, are available as videos (with English subtitles) from two sources:

- The Rutenberg & Everett Yiddish Film Library of the National Center for Jewish Film, Brandeis University, Lown 102, Waltham, MA 02254. Phone: 617-899-7044. Fax: 617-736-2070. Each video costs $72, plus $4 postage for the first video, $1 postage for each additional one.

- Ergo Media, 668 American Legion Drive, POB 2037, Teaneck, NJ 07666. Phone: 1-800-695-3746. Fax: 201-692-0663. *Americaner Shadkhn* costs $59.95. *Yiddle With His Fiddle* costs $69.95. $5 postage for the first video, $1 postage for each additional one.

[The National Center for Jewish Film provides archivally restored (better quality) videos, but they are more expensive. Ergo's films are of somewhat lesser quality but the price is lower.].

AN EXPLOSION OF JEWISH WOMEN'S POPULAR MUSIC

by Rahel Musleah

"And the women dancing with their timbrels
Followed Miriam as she sang her song.
Sing a song to the One whom we've exalted—
Miriam and the women danced and danced
the whole night long."

When Debbie Friedman wrote these words to "Miriam's Song" 17 years ago at the age of 27, she was one of a handful of Jewish women composing and performing Jewish music. Today, dozens of Miriams have grabbed their timbrels and, in Friedman's words, they have chosen to say "*hineni*"—here I am.

Take Flory Jagoda, for example, a 71-year-old grandmother who lives in Falls Church, Virginia and sings the Ladino songs of her native Sarajevo. Or Dana Mase from the Orthodox bastion of Monsey, New York, mother of four children (6 and under), once a born-again Christian who hopes to become a Jewish version of the popular Christian singer Amy Grant. Or Montrealer Fran Avni, who was a popular Israeli performer in the 1970's and who now (repatriated to Canada in order to be near her aging parents) writes and performs Jewish children's music.

MUSIC AND JEWISH IDENTITY

"Music is a basic form of communicating both personal and historical experiences," says Adrienne Cooper, a third-generation Jewish musician and historian. "And it's part of women's culture to communicate emotionally." That inherent need, coupled with the opening of the cantorate to women 20 years ago, motivated women to leap into the world of professional Jewish music, adds Cooper, who co-founded the Yiddish folk arts camp, KlezKamp, an annual inter-generational Jewish arts week in New York's Catskills.

Cooper is also a singer with the klezmer group Kapelye, and has just released her own recording, Dreaming in Yiddish, which challenges listeners to hear traditional and contemporary Yiddish folksongs "as if they had never heard them before, leaving nostalgia behind," she explains.

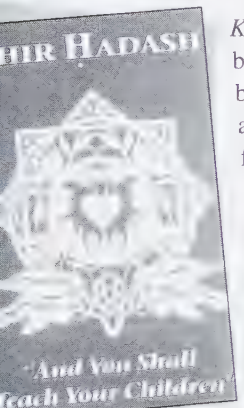
Linda Hirschhorn and Vocolot

For both performers and listeners, Cooper says, "music is a way to enter Jewish cultural literacy through a more accessible standpoint than traditional learning. It democratizes access to Jewish expression." In fact, music has shaped the Jewish identities of many of the musicians—and they express the desire to share their excitement about this with others.

"Jewish women need to hear themselves sung about with pride," says Berkeley-based singer Linda Hirschhorn, 48, founder of the *a cappella* women's group, Vocolot. "Music allows them to find ways to remain in the tradition, to change it but still be rooted in it."

CHORUS: "IF THERE'S ONE WOMAN WHO I'VE LOVED IN MY LIFE ♪ IT'S MY

LILITH's exploration of popular Jewish women's music turned up well over a hundred recordings. Almost all of the musicians and singers featured here cited the enormous barriers raised by the practical aspects of the music business. Most have funded their recordings themselves and have to promote themselves through concerts and workshops if they want to sell their work. Most support themselves through other professions. Non-parents like Frankel, Friedman and Helzner find it much easier to schedule performances than mothers with children. "No one can be a full-time musician and a parent," says Fran Avni, who interrupted her career as a performer to raise her children. "What mother can leave her children for a month to go on tour?"



Tiferet Siegel's group

Kol B'Isha Erva (often shortened to *Kol Isha*), the talmudic concept that forbids men to listen to women's voices because they are sexually distracting, creates enormous problems for Jewish female artists in terms of distributing their work. A main source of retailing is, of course, Jewish bookstores, but they are run largely by Orthodox men who refuse to carry women's recordings, says Michael Schlesinger, folklorist and owner of Global Village Music, which publishes the music of many Jewish women (from Yiddishist Ruth Rubin to Turkish singer Victoria Hazan). Tofa'ah, an Israeli-based band of Orthodox women, has channeled the prohibition positively by performing solely for female audiences.

I've chosen to feature the recordings I thought were strongest: exquisite original compositions; hauntingly beautiful blends of women's voices; robust, simple versions of old folk songs; sensitive renditions of liturgy; playful children's tunes; healing chants, and a mix of musical styles from bluegrass to Old World ethnic. In this article we'll feature vocalists in the pop and folk genres rather than performers of cantorial, classical or formal compositions.

WOMEN'S FEARS, HOPES AND ANGERS

Velvel Pasternak, owner of Tara Publications, the largest publisher and distributor of Jewish music in America, has encouraged and supported many women musicians at the inception of their careers. He agrees that many Jewish women bring something particularly moving to their work. "They infuse their music with a sense of spirituality that's hard to define," he says. "It affects the *neshama*, the soul."

"It's 'heart music' for most of us," is how Hanna Tiferet Siegel, 47, explains it. She is a songwriter and singer from Hanover, New Hampshire, whose work is popular in Jewish Renewal circles. "Our words give voice to a missing expression." Take, for example, Faith Rogow's lyrics to a song called "Mira's Lullaby": "*Strength of Deborah, wisdom of Miriam, courage of Judith, rest in your mother's arms, cradled in your mother's arms*," she sings.

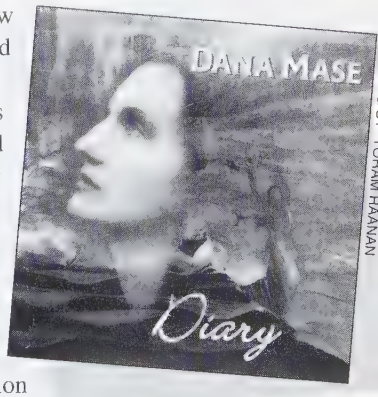
Women are filling the gaps in several major categories: They are creating new liturgical music by reinterpreting religious texts through original translations; composing pop songs in English wrapped around Jewish themes; writing children's music that explicitly imparts Jewish values; salvaging Ladino and Yiddish songs, often handed down only through oral tradition; and reintroducing neglected Hebrew folksongs from Israel's pioneer days to an American audience.

"The music reflects women's roles that range from spiritual forces to nurturers of children to angry advocates," Cooper says. She explains the last category by noting that women today are preserving Yiddish and Ladino labor and resistance songs that advocate the dignity of people and were written by women of previous generations. In her archival research, she even uncovered a song about spouse abuse that she recorded on *Dreaming in Yiddish*.

As you might suppose, contemporary lyrics express a wider range of Jewish female experience than ever before. Flory Jagoda, for example, conveys [on *Kantikas Di Mi Nona*] what Passover in Yugoslavia was like from a female point of view: "*Grandmother leads her troops against every crumb, every drop of dust, even the ceilings are not safe. And then comes the rabbi to inspect our efforts, and to remind the old aunts not to eat bread for eight days.*"

And lyricist/singer Margot Stein Azen [on her recording *Create Out of Nothing*] delivers words which elaborate on the meaning of Psalm 27 ("Let me dwell in the house of God all the days of my life."): "*Hide me, Sarah, in your tent sheltered from the storm. Rivka, light the way and I'll continue on. Mother me, oh Leah, I'm your daughter too. Rachel, in the way of women, keep me safe with you.*"

Judi Tal [on *Path Across the Sky*] turned to the traditional—but neglected—prayer, "Blessing of the Moon," which has begun to enjoy renewed usage in the context of proliferating women's Rosh Hodesh [New Moon] groups. "It's a beautiful old prayer," says Tal, "but in order to really bring it back so that it sticks as a part of women's liturgy, it needed something beyond recitation—*it needed music.*"

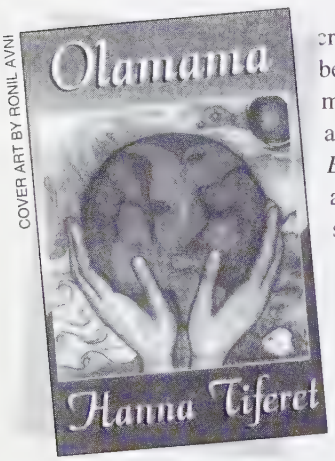


INTEGRATING GOD

Creating new Jewish music is not, however, exclusive to women. It is part of the explosion of Jewish music in the past

decade that has drawn men and women to express their true voices by combining the American musical idiom with Jewish themes. Musically, anything goes—rap, jazz, heavy metal, calypso, doo-wop, a cappella, rhythm and blues. The lyrics are as diverse as texts from the *siddur* [prayer book], to original compositions that could play on Christian radio stations, and everything in between . But the message is clear: Jewish music can be part of a contemporary vocabulary.

For many women musicians, feminism indeed is a basic word in that vocabulary. Some musicians have consciously chosen to integrate feminism into their work, singing of the Shekhinah—the feminine aspect of God—and of Miriam, Ruth and Vashti. [Unfortunately, other female musicians seem not to have given thought to their male-centered lyrics. In LILITH's opinion, they have lost a rich opportunity to remediate Judaism.]



COVER ART BY RONIL AVNI

The issue of feminism is especially crucial in composing liturgical music, because the name of God—Adonai—is male in gender. Hanna Tiferet Siegel's adaptation of the morning prayer, *Baruch She'amar*, reflects an inclusive approach common to many of the songwriters. Instead of the traditional translation, "Blessed is He whose word created the universe," she sings, "*Blessed is He. Blessed is She. Blessed are we who speak and are heard.*"

Linda Hirschhorn chooses texts that do not describe God as male or female. "I simply sing 'Praise' instead of 'Praise God.' You can still evoke a deep sense of awe and spirituality without a name." Debbie Friedman writes gender-free translations but expresses concern about changing the original Hebrew. "If we throw out the *Shema*," she says, "we throw out Bubbe and Zayde with it. I don't think we can do that. It's drastic and dangerous."

Even when women sing of home, hearth and unrequited love, there is often a feminist subtext. San Francisco singer Judy Frankel, 49, a specialist in medieval and renaissance music, makes sure to talk with her audiences about how women were responsible for passing down the legacy of Ladino tunes (called "romances"): "They transmitted the songs to their children while peeling potatoes, sweeping the floors and making the beds, while drinking coffee and looking at their fortunes in the dregs of the cups. We can be thankful for how much we've grown and evolved, but had the women been corporate executives, they wouldn't have created and passed down these songs."

DESIGN BY CATHARINE GALLAGHER

SINGING TO SURVIVE, TO TEACH, TO CREATE COMMUNITY

Even if the lyrics portray an outdated picture of Jewish life, adds Flory Jagoda (who often performs with members of her extended family), the message is the continuity of the Jewish family and the Jewish people. "Teach your children," she says, "so we can celebrate our survival."

The theme of survival resonates deeply for the musicians—Sephardic as well as Ashkenazic. Many are children of Holocaust survivors or survivors themselves. They may be folklorists like Ruth Rubin—the octogenarian doyenne of Yiddish folksong—who are committed to preserving the songs the way they were sung in Eastern Europe, unaccompanied or prettified by instrumentation. Rosalie Gerut, the child of survivors from Vilna and Lodz, dedicated her recording, *We Are Here: Songs of Remembrance, Hope and Celebration*, to the martyrs of the Holocaust and to its survivors. Sharon Wechter, 39, raised in El Paso but now living in the Berkshire mountains, was inspired by the words of "The Butterfly," a poem written by a child in the Theresienstadt concentration camp, and set them to music on her album, *Journey of a Soul*.

Israel's history and music has also captured the hearts of several of the musicians featured here, and they are passionate about the spirited folksongs, ballads and war songs that mirror Israel's glorious, tragic and romantic past. Robyn Helzner, 40, of Washington, DC, grew up with Israeli music and still enthusiastically sings both its nationalistic lyrics and its intensely personal songs of love and loss.

Another immensely creative home for many women musicians is—surprise—children's music. Cindy Paley, 42, of Los Angeles, the mother of three, has collected traditional holiday and Shabbat songs on six recordings. "If we just stick with new music," she says, "we won't know our roots." Leah Abrams, 65, of New York, and Fran Avni, 50, have composed tiny masterpieces tailored to a child's understanding, not an easy task when you want both to entertain and to teach Judaism without being heavy-handed.

The musicians featured here often cross the boundaries of children's and adult music, and break out of the limitations of one language or culture. "I'm interested in the many threads of Jewish culture," says Rita Falbel, 58, "in all its languages and places." Falbel, who escaped Vienna with her family in 1939 at the age of two, and is a founding editor of the feminist Jewish journal Bridges, recorded

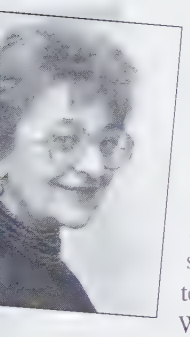
selections (on her album *Timepieces: Between Jewish Past and Future*) as diverse as the Yiddish song *Shterndel*, the Ladino song *Zorongo*, and an original song in English about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Falbel is one example of Jewish women whose work is infused with a sense of compassion and social justice. Linda Hirschhorn is another. "*Circle round for freedom. Circle round for peace. For all of us imprisoned, circle for release*," she sings on her tape, *Roots and Wings*.

Though performers often create reputations as soloists, it's not unusual for Jewish women musicians to cite building community as a vital aspect of their work. "My greatest joy is to have a community of people singing," Debbie Friedman says. "People spend enough time alone that I don't need to stand on stage alone and sing *at* people." Hirschhorn agrees. "I write in harmony," she says. "You can't sing harmony by yourself so you're forced into community."

What follows is a sampler of the best, in alphabetical order.

LEAH ABRAMS: Those Hebrew Musicals from Summer Camp



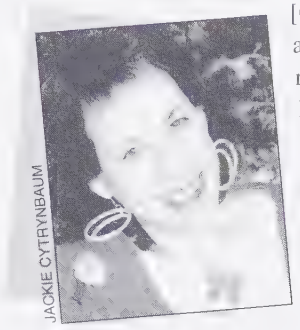
[Composer, children's music. Abrams has three recordings. None include lyrics; songbooks, however, are available separately for each tape. Sold through Tara (see directory).]

Born in Chelm, Poland, 65 years ago, Abrams grew up in Israel and the U.S. When she married a Conservative rabbi and began teaching music and drama at Camp Ramah in Wisconsin, she found the available Israeli children's plays too complicated, and so she developed her own musicals in simple Hebrew instead. "What it did for me was fabulous," she says. "I learned I could express myself."

Abrams' credentials are impressive: She wrote musicals for the New York World's Fair, worked at Hebrew University's Department of Education, developed school programs for Israel Radio (during the family's 14-year-stint back in Israel) and conducted workshops across the U.S. on music, movement and drama for young children. The special materials she created ultimately turned into her first two cassettes, which have won awards from the Jewish Early Childhood Association.

You won't hear Abrams' voice on her albums, because she hired professional musicians. Still, she's present in every vibrant word. My eight year old and three year old know most of Abrams' songs by heart. The songs once kept my younger one diverted for an hour and a half when she was 18 months old. Abrams' musical for children, *King Solomon and the Bee*, is not to be missed!

FRAN AVNI: Redefining Jewish Kids' Music



[Composer/singer, children's and adult music. Avni has ten recordings. None include lyrics. She also has two songbooks. Sold through Tara (see directory), or contact Avni directly at P.O.Box 3929, Berkeley, CA 94703.]

What most fans of Avni's children's music don't know is that the Montreal-born singer started her career as an Israeli performer after she made *aliyah* in 1966. She learned Hebrew on the job, performing for troops during the Six Day War, working on stage, theater, educational TV and radio, and forming a duo with another Canadian, Susan Cogan (a.k.a. Susan & Fran). In Montreal in 1974, a new mother herself, she teamed up with nursery school teacher Jackie Cytrynbaum to create the first label for Jewish children's music, Lemonstone Records.

Their debut recording, *Latkes and Hamentaschen*, has sold 50,000 copies and is a standard in Jewish pre-schools. Avni has written numerous Hebrew-language music curricula for children; she also continues to record for adults.

Her rhythmic, crisply articulated music for children is lively, practical and nurturing. Don't pass by her adult recordings, however—especially the peaceful, shimmering harmonic blends of *Shoshanim*, a sampler of Israeli music by Susan & Fran.

JUDY FRANKEL: Sephardi Wannabe

[Singer, Sephardic music. Frankel has two recordings. Both include lyrics in Ladino and English. Contact Frankel directly: P.O.Box 470515, San Francisco, CA 94147-0515; (415)931-7669.]

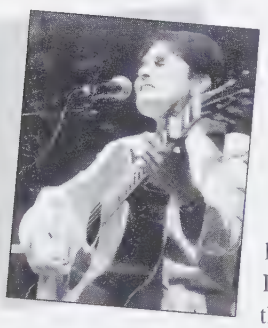
The Sephardic community of San Francisco has adopted Judy Frankel, playfully calling her "Joya Franco." Frankel knows her family is from Lithuania, but her attraction to Sephardic music is so strong that she wonders if her roots somehow go back to Spain.

Interested as well in international folk music, Frankel sings in 20 languages! As a vocal soloist with the San Francisco Consort (a chamber ensemble specializing in medieval and Renaissance music), Frankel performed much Christian early music—which got her interested in whether there wasn't a Jewish counterpart. Traveling to

Israel in search of "old" Jewish music, she found scraps of lyrics in archives and introduced this music to her ensemble. Frankel also gathered repertoire when a Jewish organization awarded her a grant to take down the oral musical-tradition of Sephardic Jews living around San Francisco. "Ladino is rapidly dying," Frankel says, "and may only survive through songs."

Frankel's voice is warm and graceful, assured and unpretentious; perfect for the romances she sings. Don't be daunted by the foreign language—it's not distracting, and Frankel's pronunciation is accurate and easy on the ear. There's something ancient and moving about this music. Frankel also sings on a stunningly beautiful collection of Yiddish, Ladino, English and Hebrew lullabies, *Sleep My Child*, produced by Rosalie Gerut.

DEBBIE FRIEDMAN: The Miriam of her Generation



[Composer/singer, adult and children's music. Friedman has 11 recordings. All include lyrics in Hebrew and English. She also has five songbooks. Sold through Tara and Sounds Write (see directory).]

"In 1971, a melody came into my head," says Friedman. "It had no lyrics, so I put it to the words of *Ve'ahavta*, 'And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart.' I sang it with some high school kids, who sang it arm in arm, crying and singing. They were looking for a spiritual avenue of their own." That was the beginning of song writing for Friedman, who had been a song leader at a Reform synagogue since age 17. Since then, though she is not trained as a musician and cannot even read music, she has given a musical voice to a new generation, and is the best selling Jewish musician in the U.S.

Born in Utica and raised in Minneapolis, Friedman made her first recording as a demo to promote herself to a studio, paid $500 more for a thousand copies, and called it *Sing Unto God*. She sold out in two weeks. After recording six albums on her own, she found a publisher, Sounds Write Productions.

Her life changed eight years ago when prescription drugs left her disabled and often in a wheelchair. Much of her music is about healing, which she views as the natural province of women. "My music is about engaging anyone willing to be a partner in *tikkun olam*, repairing the world. Music is the vehicle for the message."

At concerts, Friedman is treated almost like a guru. Her charisma pulls audiences together to sing as a community. But adulation makes her uncomfortable. "That's not how I experience myself at all. It has set me apart when all I've wanted was to bridge the gap."

Friedman describes her music as "kishka-esque," and it is. It comes from deep inside her and it touches listeners deeply. What makes her stand out from others is hard to pin down, but you'll probably come close to understanding if you listen to *Live at the Del*, which includes adult songs, kids' songs, funny songs and spiritual ones, and also showcases her dynamic interaction with an audience. Friedman's music is truthful and easy to sing; it stirs up the feeling of prayer.

ROSALIE GERUT: From Holocaust Songs to Broadway

[Singer/composer. Gerut has four recordings. All include some lyrics. Sold through Tara (see directory) or Blue Hill Recordings, P.O.Box 566, Milton, MA 02186; (617)698-9806. Fax: (508)440-8359.]

Gerut, in her 40's, a daughter of Holocaust survivors, has a passion for both Jewish music (folk and Broadway styles) *and* human rights. Descended from many generations of Yiddish folk singers, Gerut was one of the leads in--and composed the music for--*Songs of Paradise* (which ran for a year at the Joseph Papp Public Theater in New York City). She wrote the Jewish music score for the film *The Imported Bridegroom*, as well as the theme song of the P.B.S. TV documentary, "Breaking the Silence," about the children of Holocaust survivors. Gerut is a founder of One by One: Descendants of the Holocaust and the Third Reich, Inc., whose current work includes affiliating with the organization Children of War to "establish a physical place in New England where several dozen young teenagers from war-torn areas, including American inner cities, can come for a year, grieve, heal and be mentored by members of One by One," she explains.

Gerut, who does concerts accompanying herself on guitar, is a complete professional. *We Are Here*, a stirring, passionate, beautiful memorial to Holocaust survivors and martyrs, presents folk and gentle klezmer music renditions of material ranging from pre-World War II popular Yiddish tunes, to those composed in the Vilna Ghetto, to Gerut's own compositions in response to the Holocaust. *Sleep My Child* is an exquisite recording of lullabies in Yiddish, Ladino, Hebrew and English (for both adults and children) featuring the singing of Gerut, Judy Frankel and three others. *Of Angels and Horseradish* is a totally fun album of mostly Yiddish theater selections. Accompanied by the Shirim Klezmer Orchestra, Gerut sings "Coney Island" and crazy Mickey Katz's "Loudmouth Dance" ("*Trombonik Tantz*"), and Moshe Waldoks talks-sings his way through a piece of musical comedy.

HANDS WAVING IN THE AIR. ♪ I CAN SEE HER IN THE KITCHEN WHERE SHE STOOD

A Valentine to Her People: Rahel Musleah's Loving, Painstaking Project

Rahel Musleah [author of the accompanying feature], 37, immigrated to Philadelphia from Calcutta at the age of 6. A descendant of two illustrious religious families—the Musleahs on her father's side, and the Shindookh's on her mother's—Rahel can trace her lineage back through seven Calcutta generations and, before that, through three Baghdadi ones. Volumes of her great-great-great-great-great-great-great grandfather's religious poetry (*piyyutim*) and songs (*pizmonim*) still exist in manuscript. Saleh ben Yosef Musleah was the Nasi and Hazzan [president and cantor] of the Jews of Baghdad in the 1700s. Rachel's father, Ezekiel, once the rabbi of the Calcutta Jewish community (and later the rabbi of the Spanish and Portuguese synagogue in Philadelphia) also published the *pizmonim* of his people in an ethnographic study which chronicled traditions that were rapidly dying.

Rahel—a writer by trade, not a musician—decided that she wanted also, like her forefathers, to create a kind of musical valentine to her people. "My father's work was academic. I wanted to put together a tape and songbook that would be singable, not esoteric, Jewish music."

Starting by simply singing dozens of tunes into a home tape recorder, Musleah then worked long hours with Velvel Pasternak of Tara Publications. Pasternak notated the *pizmonim*, which had never been done before, while Musleah wrote explanations for each song, striving to keep alive the original Indian context. For the Passover melody to *Ha Lachma Anya* ["This is the Bread of Affliction"], for example, Masleah's songbook explains: "The custom in Calcutta homes was for each person to stand, put one hand on the matzah, and tap everyone else's hand lightly during the singing." Shabbat and holiday *pizmonim* were sung in a strict, unwavering order which Musleah has taken pains to transmit in her songbook.

Collages of over 60 old family photographs grace Musleah's book as well: her family's servant preparing aloomakalas (deep-fried potatoes) for Shabbat; her mother making hulbah (a sauce from fenugreek seeds and coriander); her great-grandfather, Meir Ezra, choosing a chicken; her great-uncle Elias having a cup of tea in the family sukkah.

"My identity is totally wrapped up in being a member of the Indian Jewish community. It's a very very deep part of me," she says. "I feel that

I personally need to preserve this music—the Torah trop, the Haftarah trop, the songs, the customs. I once learned a difficult piece of Calcutta trop and surprised my parents by reciting it in shul. They were crying. I started crying as soon as I got off the bimah. It was something so emotional, it's hard to put it into words. The Ashkenazic trop never does that to me, never. But the Indian music—people experience some ethereal effect."

"To do the Torah reading of the *Shirat HaYam* in Calcutta trop, I sat and listened to my father's voice on tapes over and over. But I don't feel I do it exactly as it was done in Calcutta. I'm not used to the cadences anymore—I'm hopelessly Westernized. When I goof up, I worry, 'Who is going to be left to carry this on, if *I* can't even do it?'"

With her two young daughters—Shoshana Michal, 3, and Shira Zahava (which means "golden song"), 9—and her rabbi-husband, Michael Klayman, Musleah continues to preserve as well as organically change Calcutta traditions within her own home.

"We take the Saturday evening ritual of singing about the zodiac, about what the week is going to mean, a half-hour of sequenced songs that I grew up with," she explains, "and we alter it with something that Shira started doing when she was five. We dance in a circle to two melodies about Elijah."

Musleah recounts a surprise that was an unexpected part of her grueling weeks spent in the recording studio. "I was singing songs over and over," she says. "This wasn't right, that wasn't right, I didn't like it, Velvel didn't like it. I was singing for hours. And it turned out—but I didn't know this at the time—that I was pregnant. Even two weeks later and I would have been too nauseated to sing.

"It gives me joy to know that Shoshana was in me during that time. My sisters and I were raised with the idea that these *pizmonim* are the most important ways to celebrate holidays and Shabbat and being together. This is so important to my parents, to my father particularly. And here I was pregnant and singing! It was one more link in a chain that's deeply beautiful."

—Susan Schnur

Rachel Musleah's tape ($10) and songbook ($20) are available from Tara Publications, or from Rahel herself: (516)829-4866.

♪♩ BLESSING THE BREAD THAT SMELLED SO GOOD, ♪ MY GRANDMA, MY MOTHER'S MO

ROBYN HELZNER: Hong Kong Hora

[Singer, adult and children's music. Helzner has three recordings. None include lyrics. Sold through RAH Productions, P.O.Box 11398, Washington, DC 20008; (202)244-3975.]

Helzner (the lead singer of the Robin Helzner Trio) began performing for Jewish organizations at age eight and went on to become a music teacher in Jewish schools. Traveling twice to the former Soviet Union, Helzner was a part of the first Jewish cultural tour there in more than 50 years. She has developed a concert tailored especially to Soviet Jews, weaving together Jewish and Russian folksongs. Helzner serves as the lay cantor for the High Holidays in—of all places—Hong Kong.

Helzner's kids' albums are fun (especially *Clap Your Hands*), but I more urgently recommend *A Fire Burns*, a collection of Israeli songs in Hebrew and Yiddish that show Helzner's strong, lovely voice at its best. In *A Fire Burns*, Helzner really shines. Both her choice of material and her delivery convey gravity and character.

LINDA HIRSCHHORN: Fugues, Canons, Rounds

JULIE POTRATZ

[Composer/singer. Hirschhorn has four recordings. All include lyrics in Hebrew and translation. She also has two songbooks and four "teaching tapes" of music for Shabbat, Passover and the High Holidays. Sold through Tara, Sounds Write (see directory), and Oyster Albums, P.O.Box 3929, Berkeley, CA 94703; (510)654-0799.]

Whenever Hirschhorn hears a melody, she says she hears it in four-part harmony automatically, "My head is full of fugues, canons, and rounds," says the mother of two. "As I hit my 40s, these melodies just welled up out of my unconscious." In 1988, Hirschhorn founded the only Jewish women's a cappella musical group, Vocolot—the name is a bilingual play on the Hebrew word *kolot* ("voices") and the English word "vocal." The group sings about compassion, peace and justice, using Jewish, folk and classical musical idioms combined with biblical and liturgical themes.

Hirschhorn started singing in a Manhattan yeshiva choir at the age of six, and she continued choral and solo singing through her college years. After being mugged several times in Manhattan, she moved to San Francisco. There she began writing folksongs and singing both Jewish and non-Jewish repertoire. Hirschhorn (who also has a Masters' degree in counseling) does everything from cantorial work to bar mitzvah training.

When she was asked, in the 1980's, to write music for a Jewish women's conference, she composed her first (now well-known) round, "*Ilu Finu*," the words of which are: "Let us have songs to fill our mouths as full as the sea." After Velvel Pasternak of Tara Publications offered to publish a book of Hirschhorn's rounds, she began to write ferociously, and formed, Vocolot, to record her compositions. Vocolot has a core of four members, but often expands to include up to seven women. Part of Vocolot's creative agenda (besides their standard concert work) is something called "concerts starring you," in which Hirschhorn cleverly incorporates a community's own choir into Vocolot's performance. Upcoming projects include composing music with Fran Avni [featured above] to accompany the new feminist liturgy of Marcia Falk [featured in LILITH, Fall 1995].

The pure harmony of women's voices together is so hauntingly beautiful that it gives me goosebumps. On *Gather Round: Songs of Celebration and Renewal* and *Roots and Wings*, the lush power of *kol isha*, unadorned by instrumentation, is unmistakably present.

FLORY JAGODA: Preserving Ladino Songs of her Native Bosnia

[Composer/singer, Sephardic music. Jagoda has three recordings. All include lyrics and loose translations. She also has one songbook. Sold through Global Village, Tara (see directory), or contact Jagoda herself: 6306 Beachway Drive, Falls Church, VA 22044; (703)379-4259.]

"Teach your children what you want your children to teach their children," Jagoda remembers her *nona*, her grandmother, telling her. Jagoda wanted to instill the love of Sephardic music in her four children and six grandchildren—so she recorded the Ladino songs of her native Bosnia. She also composes new Ladino songs.

Born in Sarajevo, Jagoda inherited her talent from her family of folk singers, 41 of whom perished in the Holocaust. She fled to Italy, where she met and married her husband, an American serviceman, fifty years ago. Jagoda built a career as an international folk singer in the U.S., narrowing her focus to Ladino songs after her mother died in 1978. "I couldn't sing in front of my mother," Jagoda says, "because she used to despair and say, 'I lost my harmony!' All of my mother's sisters and brothers—all of whom sang together—were killed." Three of Jagoda's children now perform with her.

Imagine that you're sitting around the family table and

WHERE TO GET IT

So, if you like women's music, you'll love the **Ladyslipper Catalog**. From classical to new age and from Jewish to alternative, this catalog has a huge selection of CDs, books, calendars and musical and comedic videos of popular women artists. Great chick flics like *Go Fish*, and *Kiss of the Spider Woman* can also be purchased through this catalog.

If you'd like to sample some of the tunes before you invest, you can call the **Ladyslipper Listen Line** at (919)644-1942, and preview hundreds of titles, including songs by Linda Hirschhorn, Hanna Tiferet Siegel, Ofra Haza, Rosalie Gerut and Friends, and Alix Dobkin. **Contact: For catalogs and orders call (800)634-6044, for Customer Service, call (919)683-1570; P.O.Box 3124-R, Durham, NC 27715.**

Global Village Music's catalog features a wide assortment of music influenced by hundreds of different cultures. Flory Jagoda's Ladino albums and a variety of klezmer music are the highlights of the section of Jewish traditions. Irish, Italian, Middle Eastern, East European, African-American selections are also available. The Roots of Worldbeat, and the Blue Ridge Institute Series might also be great additions for your international music collection. **Contact: 245 West 29th Street, New York, NY 10001; (212)695-6024.**

If you're looking to immerse yourself in the Yiddish culture, just open up the catalog of **The Jewish Book Center of the Workmen's Circle.** This collection showcases books, music and videos includng favorites sung by Molly Picon; cantorial and klezmer music; Yiddish art, theatre, and folk music; Yiddish poetry, and, my favorite, *The Women's Haggadah*. **Contact: 45 East 33rd Street, New York, NY 10016; (212)889-6800.**

Perfect for programmers of community activities, **The Jewish Entertainment Resource Directory**, created by singer Judy Caplan Ginsburgh, has complete listings of many of the women featured here and a slew of other Jewish performers. The 1996 edition is available for $18. **Contact: P.O.Box 12692, Alexandria, LA 71315; (318)442-8863; FAX (318)443-8816.**

For the complete round-up in women's music, check out **Women's Music Plus: Directory of Resources in Women's Music and Culture**. This annual publication lists festivals and gatherings; record distributors and labels; writers; performers; women's choirs and choruses; producers of live events; cartoonists; craftswomen; libraries and archives and more. **Hot Wire: A Journal of Women's Music and Culture** is another source for happenings in the women's music biz (January 1993's article, "Jewish Women's Identity at Fests," is great reading for LILITH musicians and fans.) **Available from: Empty Closet Enterprises, Inc., 5210 North Wayne, Chicago, IL 60640; (312)769-9009.**

Sample the music on the world wide web! If you're surfing the net and want to hear some beautiful voices, visit **Tara Publications'** impressive site at http://www.jewishmusic.com/tara/ and hear Debbie Friedman. Their catalog carries our favorites like Leah Abrams, Flory Jagoda and Rahel Musleah. **Available from Tara Publications, 29 Derby Avenue Cedarhurst, NY 11516; (516)295-2290.**

The catalog of **Sounds Write Productions** has all eleven of Debbie Friedman's albums, plus lots of other incarnations of her talent including songbooks and videos. Recordings by Judy Frankel, Linda Hirschhorn, Rosalie Gerut and Cindy Paley can also be ordered through Sounds Write. **Contact: 6685 Norman Lane, San Diego, CA 92120; (619)697-6120; FAX (619)697-6124.**

Kol Ami, Voice of My People, has the "World's Largest Selection of Israeli and Jewish Music and Videos." Though they might not be the friendliest company, they carry Yiddish film classics like *Yiddishe Mama* (starring the Jewish mother who, according to Kol Ami, "successfully guides her children through many of the world's problems"). You'll also find Ashkenazic music like the Barry Sisters and Debbie Friedman, and Sephardic music like Lauren Pomerantz and Voice of the Turtle. **Available from: Kol Ami, P.O. Box 381 Hicksville, NY 11802; (212)779-7944, or (516)933-2196.**

–Lisa Lepson

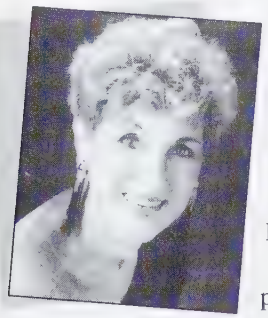
singing. Grandmother is leading, crooning the songs you grew up with: counting songs, Sabbath songs, Purim and Hanukkah songs. That's the comfortable feeling of Jagoda's gorgeous albums. Except they're in Ladino, backed with a decidedly Greek-sounding beat. [Note in particular *"La Bendison di Madre,"* "A Mother's Benediction," on the recording *La Nona Kanta: The Grandmother Sings.* It's a very old Judeo-Spanish prayer, retrieved by Jagoda, that used to be recited by Sarajevan women.]

NAOMI MILLER: The Music Even Deaf Jews 'Hear'

[Singer. Miller has two recordings. Neither includes lyrics. Contact Miller directly: 194 Webster Drive, Wayne, NJ 07470; (201)696-9280. Miller also has sign language illustrations for several of her songs.]

The child of Holocaust survivors, Miller moved to the U.S. from Landsberg, Germany at the age of two. Her first

GIRL? ♪ DID YOU HAVE TO RUN, DID YOU HAVE TO FLEE, ♪ LIVING IN A DANGEROUS

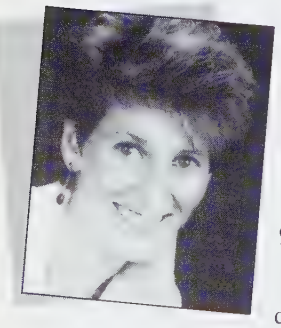


break came as a teenager when a woman visiting the *mikveh* —the ritual bath operated by Miller's parents—heard Naomi rehearsing a song for a high school show in the mikveh waiting room. The woman asked Naomi to perform a Mother's Day program at the local Yavneh Academy in Patterson, New Jersey.

Through music, Miller, a speech therapist, feels she's been able to vent her emotions and deal with two major events in her life: the legacy of the Holocaust and her son Philip's deafness. Miller has founded two organizations in New Jersey: Parents for Deaf Awareness, a support group, and the Jewish Deaf and Hearing Impaired Council, which raises funds for interpreters and sensitivity training in the Jewish community. Her album, *Keeping Our Dreams Alive* (our favorite), includes wacky sign language illustrations (her son Philip dressed as Big Bird signing) for the song *"Koo-Koo-Ree-Koo."* Miller's husband, Harvey, an amateur Israeli and ballroom dancer, signs his wife's concerts. "Why do the deaf come to my shows? They respond to the graceful poetry of Harvey's fingers which are like dancers in the air. Harvey transfers my sung emotions into his hands, and the deaf 'hear.' It's very moving."

Miller delivers up a variety of Jewish music with an old fashioned, campy, sometimes shlocky, lusty, unself-conscious passion. She's not afraid of comedy ("Midnight in Paramus"), sentimentality ("Papa Can You Hear Me"), social action ("Tell Them We're Still Here"), English, Hebrew, Russian, Yiddish or Ladino. Miller enjoys herself, and so will you.

CINDY PALEY: From Cheerleader to Songleader



[Singer, children's and adult music. Paley has seven recordings. Six are children's cassettes which include large booklets with lyrics in Hebrew, clear transliteration and English. Sold through Sounds Write (see directory), or through Paley herself: 14246 Chandler Blvd., Van Nuys, CA 91401; (818)907-8954.]

As a cheerleader in high school, Paley didn't care much about football. "I liked to be out in front," she says, "leading people and performing." She decided, however, on a career as a French teacher. Positions in her native Los Angeles were meager, so she instead drew on her song-leading background and began teaching music in synagogues and Jewish day schools. At the request of nursery school parents, Paley made her first tape—100 songs in 90 minutes!—that was circulated locally. Aside from recording, Paley does holiday shows with singer-comedian Kenny Ellis, and she also serves as a High Holiday lay cantor.

One of Paley's tapes is for adults: With her group, Koleet, which includes two other female singers, Paley sings in Ladino, Yemenite, Russian and Hebrew.

Paley has done a real service in collecting children's holiday music that doesn't begin and end with *"Dayeinu"* and "I Had a Little Dreidel." Though her voice is a bit saccharine, it is well-suited to children, who gravitate to her enthusiasm and sweetness.

HANNA TIFERET SIEGEL: *Niggunim* and Healing

LLOYD WOLF

[Composer/singer. Siegel has four recordings. Lyrics included in English and Hebrew transliteration. To purchase, contact Siegel directly: 8 Carter Street, Hanover, NH 03755; (603)643-5149.]

Growing up, Siegel studied classical flute, but at a Shabbat retreat in college she met Shlomo Carlebach, the late charismatic Hasidic "singing rabbi," and she became his protégée. "I used to love leading songs in U.S.Y. [United Synagogue Youth]," she says, "but I didn't know what to do with this when I grew up. Carlebach showed me what to do." Later, Rabbi Zalman Schachter-Shalomi, the father of the Jewish Renewal movement, taught Siegel the structure of chassidic *niggunim*--chant-like, repeating melodies--that are the basis for her music.

In Vancouver, Siegel founded a havurah called Or Shalom. With two of its members, Myrna Rabinowitz and Harvey Rothstein, she formed Shir Hadash ("a new song"), and the group recorded two albums. When her husband, a rabbi, accepted a new pulpit in 1987 in Hanover, NH, the Siegels moved, and the mother of three began recording her music solo. "I try to give voice to the feminine spirit," she says. "I sing traditional Hebrew prayers--elaborating on them in English to try to make them accessible."

Siegel's albums are, in her words, "Jewish soul music--acoustic, folk-style tunes that are heartfelt and meditative. *Refuah Shleyma: The Healing Circle*, with guitarist Nomi Fenson, was my response to people telling me that they use my tapes for healing. I set to music Moses' prayer for Miriam's healing, and the Priestly Blessing feminized and called 'The Priestess's Blessing.'" Siegel's last album, *Olamama* (mother of the world), recorded with Fran Avni, is family-oriented, upbeat and celebratory, with styles ranging from calypso and jazz to folk ballads and niggunim.

Siegel doesn't overpower listeners with her voice; instead she uses her soothing voice to help listeners focus on the healing quality of the words. The *niggun*-based

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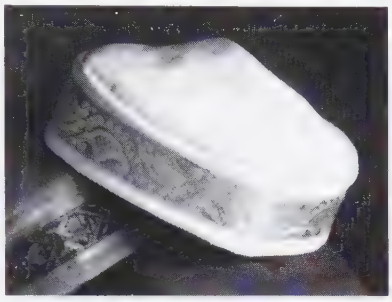

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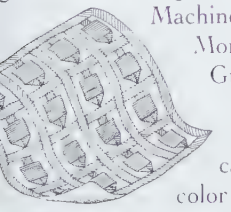

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music is intentionally repetitive, so be prepared, and you'll find calmness in its chords. *Olamama* is the most feminist and best-produced of Siegel's recordings.

JULIE SILVER: Carole King in Blue Jeans

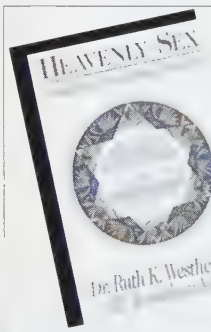
[Composer/singer. Silver has three recordings. All include lyrics in English, Hebrew and transliteration. Sold through A Silver Girl Production, P.O.Box 610281, Newton Highlands, MA 02161; (617)244-9631 or (310)395-3167.]

Silver, 29, who grew up in both the Conservative and Reform movements, is one of the few female musicians who is able to support herself entirely through performing Jewish music. For the past two years she (and her acoustic guitar) have traveled full-time across the country, playing Jewish community centers, conventions, synagogues and campuses. "It's like people have been waiting for this Carole King-influenced, thoughtful '60s and '70s type music. The Jewish community has opened its doors to me. It's incredible for me, as a young artist, to wake up every morning and realize I'm doing what I love and getting paid for it. There's like a big voice in my head that's saying, *'lech lecha'*--go forth."

Silver writes nearly all of her own lyrics and tunes, though she also sets traditional prayers to new music. "My first two albums are more summer-campy, written by a young Jewish American woman about her experiences. My third album, *Walk With Me*, is darker, more meditative." Indeed, *Walk With Me,* shows off Silver's mellow voice and maturing style, and has received much attention. Here's a wedding lyric based on The Song of Songs: "When the wind blows gently and the shadows flee/ I will take you to the garden, I will take you with me./ Shining through like the new dawn, beautiful as the moon above/ Like a lily among the thorns, how sweet is your love."

TOFA'AH: All Female, Orthodox Band

[Tofa'ah has four recordings. All include lyrics in English and Hebrew. Sold through Tofa'ah, 199 Caroline St., Saratoga Springs, NY 12866; (518)584-2474.]



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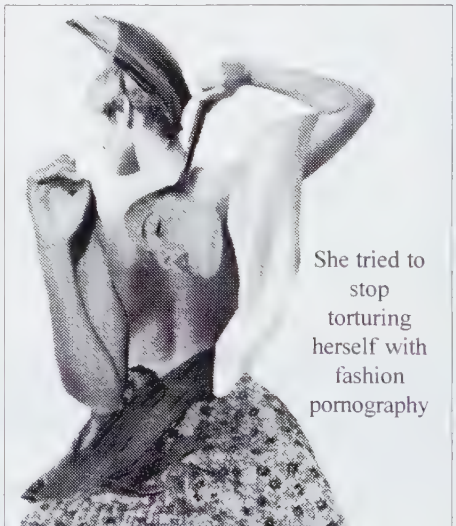

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." ♪ SAID MY GRANDMA, MY MOTHER'S MOM." ♪♩

ath Pelham is a terrific family folksinger along the ethical-political-multicultural lines of Pete eger. On her feminist children's tape, *Look to the People* [Flying Fish Recordings], she sings s "Grandma Song." [Ruth Pelham can be contacted: P.O.B. 6024, Albany, NY 12206.]

For members of Tofa'ah, the Orthodox Israeli women's liturgical band that plays to women-only audiences, rehearsals mean nursing infants while practicing, and cradling children on laps while drumming. "We bring our lifestyles into our music," says Mindy Fuhrer, singer and guitarist.

Tofa-ah, literally "phenomenon," is comprised of eight core members, all American transplants to Israel who range in age from 17 to a 53-year-old grandmother of nine. Each has between one and five children and brings to the group her own musical style--jazz, classical, pop, rock, country. In 1981, founder Yona Saslow Yacobovitz, the group's drummer, did a benefit performance in Jerusalem with several women friends for a family that had lost everything in a fire. Since then, she says, she's had a mission to help people through music. Tofa'ah has played at women's music festivals, for the wives of Egged bus drivers, and at women's prisons, immigration centers and schools, and has formed an organization (called *Tof-Miriam,* Miriam's Drum) to help other women artists in Israel.

It's uplifting just knowing this band is made up of Orthodox Jewish women. The music is lively, strong, unapologetic in the right places and sensitive in others. Still, it's a little disconcerting to hear a rich blend of women's voices singing *"Ashrei Ha'ish,"* "Happy is the Man." I must confess that Tofa'ah's bluegrass rendition of the biblical "Song at the Red Sea" (*"Shira Hadasha"*) had me wondering if the women--3000 years ago--had been square dancing there. □

Also of Note

Here's how to get the music of the artists that are mentioned in our article but not profiled: **Margot Stein Azen's** two solo albums *Create Out of Nothing* and *Guarding the Garden* (the eco-feminist musical) and her newest album, *A Moon Note* (its Hebrew homonym: *Emunot*), recorded with two other rabbinical students, **Rayzel Raphael**, and **Juliet Spitzer** [New Legends, 608 West Upsal Street, Philadelphia, PA 19119; (215)843-1918] • **Adrienne Cooper's** *Dreaming in Yiddish* [from Cooper herself: 90 LaSalle Street, Apt. 19C, NYC, NY 10027; (212)866-1095] • **Rita Falbel's** two recordings of Jewish international music, *Timepieces: Between Jewish Past and Future,* and *Hitchin' Rides* [Ruffled Feathers Music, 23 West 68th Street, NYC, NY 10023; (212)873-3129] • **Dana Mase's** albums, *Diary* and *Sitting With an Angel* which includes additional vocals from David Broza, the king of Israeli pop music [Water Records P.O.Box 393, Tallman, NY 10982-0393; (800)356-1469] • For ***Ruth Rubin:*** *Yiddish Songs of the Holocaust*, the live recording of Rubin's lecture/recital, [Global Village Music (see directory)] • **Judi Tal's** *Path Across the Sky* [Galit Productions, P.O.Box 21419, Baltimore, MD 21208; (410)730-0443, fax (410)730-4656] • **Sharon Wechter's** *Journey of a Soul* [Neshama Productions, P.O.Box 620, New Lebanon, NY 12125].

For the Kids

A third generation cantor, **Deborah Katchko-Zimmerman's** most popular recording is *Kindersongs: Jewish sing-a-long for Families* on which she sing basics for 5-9 year olds accomplanied by children and folk guitar. Another recording, *Spirited and Soulful,* has songs about Jewish identity. [Order from Katchko-Zimmerman at 11 Birch Street, Norwalk, CT 06851; (203)854-1684, fax (203)838-5021 or from Tara Publications (see directory).] • **Ilene Safyan and Margie Rosenthal**, two friends from Portland, sing wonderful songs for the three and under crowd. Our favorite of their 6 recordings is *Just in Time for Chanukah* [Sheera Recordings, P.O. Box 19414, Portland, OR 97219; (503)221-1848 or (503)635-6502].

Yiddish and Ladino

Lauren Pomerantz's albums, *Jewels of the Sephardim* and *Wings of time: the Sephardic Legacy of Multicultural Medieval Spain*, includes Biblical Ballads, Hebrew poetry from Medieval Spain set to Music [Kol Ami (see directory)].• **Eleanor Reissa** is truly a professional whose gorgeous recordings of Yiddish Broadway tunes are simply delightful. We especially recommend *Gems of Yiddish Song* [The Workman's Circle Catalog (see sidebar directory)]. • **Tanja Solnik**, who has appeared on "The Ed Sullivan Show", soothes the listener, as she sings in Yiddish, English and Hebrew accompanied by accordion and balalaika on her album *From Generation to Generation: Legacy of Lullabies.* [Dream Song Recordings, 2505 7th Street, Santa Monica, CA 90405; (310)450-0144].

Way Feminist

What **Faith Rogow's** album lacks in professional quality, it makes up for in feminist content. *Courage to Dare* sets to music the feminist liturgy of Marcia Falk, whose prayers were also featured in LILITH, Fall 1995 [Rogow at 19 Barbara Avenue, Binghamton, NY 13903]. • **Laura Wetzler's** albums, *A World of Jewish Folk Music* and *Laura Wetzler,* are sung in Hebrew, Yiddish, Ladino or English and accompanied by guitar and Yemenite drum [Nervy Girl Records Box 406, Times Plaza Station, Brooklyn, NY 11217-0406; (718)596-5725].

–Lisa Lepson

ALTRUISTS

Linking Jewish and feminist values, we launch "Altruists," an occasional column featuring the courageous, independent work of special Jewish women.

Saving Dina

A Course in Miracles? We can make our own. Here is the tale of one altruistic woman who saved the life of a war orphan 50 years ago.

by Jean Shikman

When commercials occasionally appear on television, urging viewers to sponsor a needy child, I am immediately reminded of my mother-in-law, Frieda Shikman, who is now 88 years old. Because of her compassionate and dogged spirit, in 1948 she rescued an orphan named Dina from the ashes of war-torn Europe, bringing her to the United States.

Actually, it was my husband, Sol, who was the first person in his family to meet Dina. Still today, when Dina introduces him to her friends, she will often say, "I'd like you to meet my brother—the Prince Charming who changed my life."

As an 18-year-old officer of the Merchant Marines in 1946, Sol's ship was commissioned by UNWRA (United Nations Work Relief Association) to bring horses to Poland. This cargo was necessary, as thousands of farm animals had been slaughtered during World War II. After disembarking from his ship at the port of Danzig, Sol went with some of his shipmates to the Grand Hotel in Sobot, a nearby suburb. In the dining room, he noticed a group of young boys and girls.

"Who are these children?" he asked the waiter.

"I may not have room in the apartment, but I have room in the heart."

–Frieda Shikman

"*Juden* [Jews]," replied the waiter in a sneering manner, making an ugly gesture and pointing his finger to his nose. Instantly Sol recalled the malignant anti-Semitism he had experienced growing up in a non-Jewish neighborhood in New York. Words such as "Jew bastard" and "dirty Jew" reverberated in his head. Anger surged in him and he felt like lashing out at the waiter. Instead, he walked to the other side of the room to meet the children.

It was then that Sol met Dina. She was very noticeable as she was exceptionally pretty with small chiseled features and long blond silky hair. She also looked older than the other children in the group. Sol estimated her age at 12 or 13—most of the other children, he thought, looked 8 or 9. Some of the children had numbers tattooed on their forearms. As soon as Dina saw Sol walking towards her group, she left her seat and went over to greet him.

She was very curious about the United States. She spoke mainly in Yiddish, but occasionally used an English word.

"Where did you learn to speak English?" Sol asked.

"I was liberated by the British," she replied.

At first, Sol was perplexed by her answer, as the

JUNE 8, 1948

FORMER SLAVE-LABORER FINDS A SISTER IN AMERICA

Joyous Dinah Room (right), 15, German-Jewish war orphan, meets her foster sister, Renee Shickman, 17, of 127 E. 7th St. (Other Photo on Back Page) (Mirror Photo)

War Orphan, 15, Lands Here, Finds New Home, New Hopes

It was a rainy and dreary arrival here yesterday for 342 passengers on the motorship Sobieski out of Naples.

British army was never in Poland. "You mean the Russians," he said.

"No," she answered, "I was in Germany during the war in the town of Schleswig. I worked at a munitions factory which made torpedoes."

Sol noticed that Dina became upset as she spoke of her wartime experiences, so he did not pursue the matter further.

Soon Lena, the leader of the group, approached their table and said that the children had to leave. [Several years ago a TV movie, entitled "Lena's 100 Children," was made about this exceptional woman and this particular group of Polish-Jewish orphans.] Before the children departed, however, Sol wrote his address on two slips of paper and gave one to Dina and the other to a girl who seemed to be Dina's close friend.

"Write to my mother," Sol said. "She will send you packages from America."

That night, Sol couldn't sleep. He kept seeing the faces of the children, especially those who had numbers on their arms. He realized that if his grandparents hadn't emigrated from Poland to the United States, he and his sister Renee might have been among those children. *If* they were lucky—for these orphans were alive, while over a million and a half other Jewish children had been murdered by Nazis.

Sol was annoyed with himself for not giving his address to one of the leaders. "What if Dina or the other girl lost the address?" he worried. If that occurred, since he did not know the location of the orphanage, he would lose complete contact with Dina and her friend.

The following day he went back to the hotel, hoping to meet someone who might know where the orphanage was. Fortunately, the maître-d' was able to help.

It turned out that the orphanage was just a few blocks from the hotel. To Sol's surprise, he observed several crucifixes on the wall—so this was a Catholic, not a Jewish, institution. He gave his address to one of the leaders, chatted some with Dina, and again urged her and her friend to write to his mother.

Shortly thereafter, Sol's mother Frieda received a letter from Dina. She wrote about meeting Sol and the kindness he had shown towards her and her friend. The following day, Frieda bought a blouse and a sweater and sent them to Dina. She also sent 200 lollipops to distribute to the children.

"Dina's first night in America, she woke up screaming. I said, 'Sha, sha, mameleh, you're in good hands.'"

When the package arrived, Dina was thrilled. When she tried on the new blouse and sweater, she was ecstatic—as all of the clothes that she wore were secondhand, donated to the orphanage by different charities.

The next letter that Frieda received from Dina was from France. Because of the dangerous anti-Semitism prevalent in Poland, even after the war, the Jewish children were forced to leave the orphanage. They first traveled to Czechoslovakia, and eventually to France.

Saved, damned, saved

A continuous correspondence ensued between Dina and Frieda over the next two and a half years. (Dina's friend never wrote to Frieda, and it is not known what happened to her.) In one letter, Dina described her miraculous survival during the war. When the Germans occupied Poland and came to the city of Wrocław (where Dina lived), they went into various neighborhoods searching for Jews. When they got to Dina's home, she was in a nearby park with her housekeeper, Jadzea.

As they left the park and approached the street where Dina lived, they saw Dina's parents and several Jewish neighbors, their arms raised, being led away by German soldiers. Naturally, Dina wanted to run to be with her mother, but Jadzea held her hand firmly, and together they walked toward another street. This was the last time Dina saw her parents. She was seven.

Thereafter, Dina lived with Jadzea and her family. On one occasion, Jadzea gave Dina a crucifix on a necklace and said to her, "Wear this cross and never tell anyone that you are Jewish, as it may be dangerous for you." I cannot begin to imagine the fear felt by this young girl.

Within a few months, the Germans went to thousands of apartments and ordered each family to surrender one child for the purpose of working in a factory in Germany. When the Nazis came to the home of Jadzea, she pointed to Dina, rather than to one of her own.

Dina was deported to Germany, to the town of Schleswig. In a nearby suburb called Eckenpoerde, she worked as a slave laborer in a torpedo factory. During an aerial bombardment of Germany when thousands of people were killed, Dina and a friend of hers stepped on a mine. The friend was killed, and Dina seriously wounded

in the leg. She was taken to a hospital where she was informed by a nurse that her leg would be amputated. Fortunately, within days, another miracle: British soldiers occupied the city, and English doctors treated and saved Dina's leg. (It has, however, been a significant handicap to Dina throughout her life.)

Since Frieda and her husband Ben were so moved by Dina's story, they decided to bring her to the United States and adopt her as their daughter. Their friends and relatives advised against this—as Frieda and Ben had extremely limited financial means. They lived in a small railroad flat on the Lower East Side of Manhattan. Ben ran a small second-hand furniture store on First Avenue.

When a neighbor said to Frieda, "You already have two grown children; besides, you don't have room in your tiny apartment for another person," Frieda answered, "I may not have room in the apartment, but I have room in the heart."

In order to bring Dina to this country, Frieda mulishly persevered through more than two years of red tape and seemingly insurmountable obstacles. Finally, with the assistance of HIAS (The Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society), she prevailed.

A final miracle

At the end of May, 1948, Dina, already 15 years old, sailed from Caen, France, to the United States. The voyage took 11 days, and, during that time, Dina became severely depressed. She began seriously to doubt that Frieda and Ben intended to love her, and she started to believe that she was heading towards a life as an indentured servant—or worse. One day, feeling alone in the world and without hope, Dina climbed to the highest deck on the ship, intending to jump.

At that moment, the loudspeaker paged her to come to the Radio Room. She had received a cable from Frieda. Dina climbed down from her suicide perch, received the brief cable, but—not knowing English—understood none of the four words except the last. Apparently, that one word was enough. "Welcome home," it said. "Love, Mother." □

Jean Shikman, 62, once an antiques dealer, is a writer who switched vocations when she became wheelchair-bound with multiple sclerosis. Her special area of expertise is disability and physical access.

Frieda Shikman at 88

Remembering the early years with Dina...

"My son Shloimehleh, he was just a boy, he first saw Dina in a restaurant in Poland and he *made* an anti-Semitic waiter serve her. He wouldn't let Dina go until she promised to write his mother in America. Dina sent me a letter from the orphanage: 'I want a mother, a father and a *dakh* [roof].' At that moment, I *knew* I would be her mother. You see, I was a child in Poland during a war, too, living with my grandmother. We starved, and my sister and my brother died from eating poisonous mushrooms.

"Dina was the first to get to New York after the Second World War, so all the newspapers ran stories about her. It took me two and a half years of red tape, but I made good a promise."

Arrivals From Europe on the Scheuski and the Queen Mary |

"Her first night in America, she had nightmares and woke up screaming. My husband brought Dina into the bed with me, and then—he was six feet tall—he got into Dina's tiny cot. I said, '*Sha sha mameleh*, you're in good hands.'

"Even when Dina was a child, if I was sad, she cheered *me* up. Still today, she hugs me, she could break my bones.

"When it was time for Dina's wedding, I told the caterer, 'This has to be the finest in all history.' He gave me a look like I was difficult, so I explained him. 'Look,' I said, 'I am not Dina's mother, but God chose me and my husband to walk Dina down this aisle.'

"A person can do many many mitzvahs in this world. What I did with Dina was just one. We had nothing to offer her financially, no bedroom for her, nothing. I gave her my love—what I would give my own children. For many years I was a fundraiser for myasthenia gravis. For fundraising, I talk to myself in the mirror: You're going to have to have nerve, and have chutzpah, and become a *shnorrer.* For mitzvahs, those three things are always in my mind.

"At age 88, I just became a fundraiser for disabled children in Israel. Why would I become a fundraiser for disabled children in Israel at age 88? Because—it's *bashert.* There isn't a day I don't get money to send."

—*Susan Schnur*

Rachel Félix:

Europe's First Real Theatrical Star 1821-1858

"La Grande Rachel"
portrait by
Jean-Léon Gérôme,
1859;
Salon of 1861

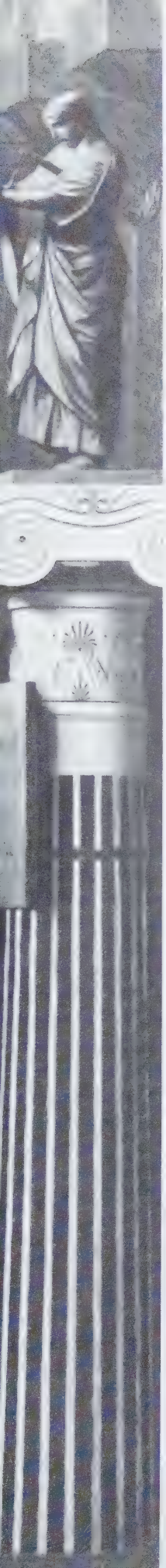
Tragic Muse:
Rachel of the Comédie-Francaise
by Rachel M. Brownstein
[Duke University Press, 1995], $16.95

Rachel of the Comédie-Francaise ("La Grande Rachel"), nee Rachel Félix, was an icon of her day, Europe's first real theatrical star, the Marilyn Monroe/Elizabeth Taylor/Madonna of mid-1800's France. Plays were written for her, and scores of novels, poems and biographies were written about her. Her affairs with princes and even with an emperor-to-be were well known, and European audiences dreamed of converting this daughter of Jewish peddlers to Catholicism.

Arguing about Rachel's image was, for nearly a century, a popular French pastime—fraught with misogyny, anti-Semitism and politics. Chanting *La Marseillaise* in France's national theater after a change of government, for example, Rachel was canonized by some as a patriotic daughter of the French people, and demonized by others as a tool of the new government, deployed to calm mobs.

Though nearly 150 years have passed since Rachel's death from tuberculosis in 1858 (at 37), how to "read" this great tragedienne is still a matter of intellectual and artistic debate. Rachel herself—like her modern Hollywood female counterparts—lost no opportunity to "craft" her image, adding endless drama to the popular obsession of trying to discern Rachel's "real" self.

Beginning her career in rags as a street singer, Rachel became the darling of royalty, and yet remained close with her much-maligned Jewish family: those "greedy" and "vulgar" foreigners who—in the eyes of many—hawked their miraculously talented daughter for their own profit. She never forsook her Jewishness, never married, and insisted on involving her father, sisters and brother in



> Mesmerized and hysterical audiences came to witness not only Rachel's great performances—but the spectacle of a star being consumed by her role.

every turn of her career, seemingly indifferent to how others might feel about the presence of such undesirables.

According to author Brownstein, Rachel was, indeed, an amalgam of contradictions: "Rachel the child of the streets and stage queen; chaste courtesan; classical tragedienne and romantic actress; monstrous egotist and loving daughter, mother and sister." Add to this, "fallen" woman, and we begin to approach the provocative mix of myth and truth that kept fans endlessly entranced by her.

By no accounts was Rachel an attractive woman. Descriptions of her, in fact, often pivot on a such phrase as "despite her plainness." Over and over, critics praise "her strangely rough voice, her flashing eye, her spectral look, her feverishness." (And, as if to showcase simultaneously Rachel's prodigious talent and Paris's casual anti-Semitism, one critic admiringly observed that, "Rachel made a common Jewish physiognomy lovely by mere force of expression.")

When she struck a pose on stage, however, audiences were enthralled. Her critics compared her to a marble statue in her dignified, restrained passion. Rachel played Hermione, Tisbe and Roxane in the classical tragic style, and her most triumphant role was as Racine's Phèdre.

The "making" of *"La Grande Rachel"* was also a hotly contested question. Critics posited this man or that—teacher, critic, theater director, reviewer—as responsible for this phenomenon called *"Rachel."* Brownstein notes, of course, the conspicuous absence of credit given to Rachel herself (or, heaven forbid, to Rachel's "coarse" Jewish family). But whomever the ultimate Pygmalion of her success, Rachel rose quickly from singing with her sister on the streets, through acting classes and auditions, and on to France's most high-brow theater, the Comédie-Francaise.

It was here that Rachel accomplished what many thought impossible—the transformation of a "politically incorrect," fast-fading, anachronistic institution into a stunningly redeemed financial and cultural success. At the time that Rachel first joined the French national theater, post-Revolutionary playwrights were producing increasingly violent, expressionistic work to mirror the bloody events that people had seen on the streets. The Comédie-Francaise, with it insistence on classical tragedy's muted and stylized gestures and formal conventions, seemed, by comparison, irrelevant, elitist and passé.

Interestingly, the 17-year-old Rachel's success in no way consisted of violating the conventions of the Comédie-Francaise. On the contrary, her postures were classical, she recited her couplets in traditional style, and the hallmark of her performance was a manner so restrained that her slightest gesture drew impassioned responses from the audience.

People flocked to see her, and, in the course of only one summer, Rachel astonished France by turning the fortunes of the Comédie-Francaise completely around. This slight Jewish woman draped in a toga seemed to represent something her

audiences desperately sought: "Standing up alone for Corneille," Brownstein writes, "assuming the grand manner and making it thrilling once more, [Rachel] seemed to chasten the corrupted taste of the Boulevard du Crime, and to stand for France at its noblest."

The meaning of Rachel's Jewishness, to her fans as well as her detractors, is in its own right fascinating. Some 19th-century writers highlighted the fact that Rachel was a Jew, while others attemped to argue that she wasn't. Some descriptions of the star are laden with an anti-Semitism so thick that it obscures any accurate vision of her.

References to the Félix family's "congenital rapacity"—in keeping with ethnic "trait" theories of the time—abound. Rachel's interest in box-office receipts, her pleasure in extravagant jewelry and in giving expensive gifts to her family were, naturally, cited as "proofs" of her unfortunate hereditary degeneracy. Some writings about Rachel fabricate a racist rags-to-riches story: that she came from a veritable "dung heap" of crudeness and depravity, but became, because of an externally begotten talent, paradoxically charged to bear the banner of France's honor.

Yet another source of critical unease regarding Rachel was, of course, that she was a woman on "display" in 19th-century France. Her aggressive pursuit of her career left many talking about her "male" talent and her "unwomanly will to fame." The question of her sexual availability was also, of course, fodder for public debate. Her persona as the innocent, ever-chaperoned tragedienne was shattered all at once, one evening, when a patron read some of Rachel's love letters aloud at a society dinner. Overnight, Rachel's public identity changed from that of "pure chaste child" to that of sexual woman. Exposed to public scandal, Rachel shrewdly reshaped her image positively—as a savvy woman of the world.

Once she had become, however, in the public's eyes, a "dangerous, foreign, fallen woman, the *femme artiste* who unsettlingly combines Nature and Art," Rachel seems to have lived the life she chose, more or less successfully manipulating her career and her image to her advantage. She had one sexual affair after another, maintaining an elaborate network of friendships with ex-lovers. She never married ("I will have renters, but not owners," she was known to declare).

La Grande Rachel had many sexual liaisons, but she never married. 'I will have renters,' she was known to declare boldly, 'but not owners.'

In the course of her years touring Europe, Rachel had two sons: one fathered by Count Alexandre Colonna Walewski (a son of Napoleon), the other by Arthur Bertrand. What sort of a mother she was is obscure. Descriptions of her behavior with her sons range from tender to indifferent. ("An unmarried star is supposed to be a bad mother," comments Brownstein. "It is part of the fantasy of her monstrous unwomanliness.") But Rachel's letters, although only rarely referenced in Brownstein's biography, seem to indicate a great dedication to all members of her family, her children being no exception.

The list of commentators who wrote about Rachel reads like a 19th-century *Who's Who*: Henry James, Charlotte Brontë, George Eliot, George Sand, Matthew Arnold, Virginia Woolf, Margaret Fuller, and on and on.

Ultimately, though, her life ended prematurely—like those of the tragic heroines she portrayed. After a tour of America, where she mesmerized audiences who did not understand a word of her language, and where she fell so severely ill that she collapsed on stage in Charleston, Rachel was sent to Egypt for a rest cure. There, in the shadow of pyramids, *La Grande Rachel* writes: "I came here to find the life that is fleeing me, and all around me I see only death."

Rachel—dead of tuberculosis at age 37 (her beloved sister Rebecca had died of the same illness at 25)—was mourned by crowds of admirers in a state funeral that was, as Brownstein terms it, "the ultimate appropriation of woman by the nation."

Yet even after her death, her image was revived and debated again and again to suit the needs of successive generations. Her identity as a true daughter of France became the subject of fierce discussion in the aftermath of the Dreyfus affair, and, in the troubled 1930's, Jewish groups set about claiming Rachel in earnest, casting her in the image of a Hebrew heroine. Biographies of Rachel, which proliferated after her death, range from moralistic to tabloidesque.

Her life was perhaps a foreshadowing of other consummate "public women" whose lives seemed destined to become, as Brownstein puts it, "embroiled with fictions." If *Tragic Muse* often seems not so much the biography of a woman as it is the biography of an image, perhaps that is, after all, most fitting. □

—Rachel Kadish

...And the Critics Said

In 1853, a critic named Annenkov, observing Rachel of the Comédie-Francaise playing Racine's Phèdre in Russia, penned this:

Rachel begins, with full voice, the tale of her criminal love. Soon the words, the couplets, as if driven by the thought, begin to run as incredible, barely audible speech. A whisper—which betrays her passion with a rapidity almost convulsive—becomes unbearable. In mid-monologue, Phèdre, giving herself up totally to a single thought, loses self-consciousness and is almost beside herself.

Her lips tremble, her eyes blaze with a maniacal fire, a gesture becomes insanely expressive, that ghastly whisper goes on the whole time, and the words run on, filled with agonizing truth. She bursts out in a thundering confession of her criminal passion in the face of heaven and earth until—filled to the brim with horror and self-revulsion—she seizes Hippolyte's sword and is borne off-stage unconscious by her confidante.

Only then does the parterre take a breath and rise as one man, crying, "Rachel!" Such is the scene.

and the author of Tragic Muse, *Rachel Brownstein, adds:*

Exhausted by her performance, she [chose] not to come onstage to take her bow, tacitly bowing to the greater reality of the tragedy, showing her respect for Racine, suggesting that the actress had merged with, or been overcome by, the character she played....the audience came to witness not only Phedre's suffering and Rachel's great performance, but the spectacle of the star being consumed by her role.

E JEWISH WOMEN OF GLOBAL VILLAGE MUSIC

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- **Have you noticed something missing when you see announcements of Jewish community events?**
- **Do you ask "What's wrong with this picture?" when you see a panel of all male participants?**
- **Are you frustrated when you count up names on boards of directors and committees and you see that women are underrepresented?**

WELCOME TO THE CLUB.

LILITH's editors have been monitoring Jewish organizations and events to try to ensure equal participation of women and men. In the past three years we have taken concrete steps to help insure that more women are at the podium, on the synagogue bima, in the organizational leadership and speaking out in the media. How? Through the Jewish Women's Talent Bank, which gathers resumes of Jewish women experts in fields ranging from AIDS to Zionism, and helps organizations, program planners and the media find the right woman for the occasion. If you're planning a Jewish activity in your community and want to make sure that you include women speakers, consultants and experts of all sorts—and if you are a woman with special expertise who would like to request a Talent Bank form—contact Talent Bank Director Naomi Danis at LILITH, Suite 2432, 250 West 57 Street, NYC 10107; (212)757-0818; Fax (212)757-5705; e-mail: lilithmag@aol.com.

HEAVENLY SEX: SEXUALITY IN THE JEWISH TRADITION by Dr. Ruth K. Westheimer and Jonathan Mark [NYU Press], $22.95

Heavenly Sex, a rich, readable compendium of biblical and talmudic anecdotes regarding love and sexuality, is a strong Jewish antidote to *The Bridges of Madison County*, in which romantic bliss is portrayed as being nearly impossible to find. In the Jewish view presented here, God has created all humans with the capacity for sexual and relational bliss, and *halakhic* guidelines are intended to help Jews experience the profound spiritual pleasures that are a part of physical and emotional intimacy.

Westheimer and Mark bring important new angles to familiar Jewish texts and rituals. For example, they discuss biblical precedents for non-*halakhic* unions (like Ruth and Boaz, David and Bathsheba, Joseph and Potiphar's wife), and they explain the sexual (kabbalistic) symbolism of Shabbat and Havdalah candles: the former candles—two, freestanding—symbolize that Jews are ushering in a day that is specifically intended for the holiness of relationships. The latter candle—like intertwined limbs—makes a closing Shabbat statement: the day can now end, in part because sex has been sacredly consummated.

Though readers might be distressed by the absence of any mention of AIDS or contraception (this is, after all, 1995!), *Heavenly Sex* is otherwise an excellent book. Judaism is uniquely pro-love and pro-marital-sex; *halakhah* seeks to create an environment in which love and marital sex are enhanced, and in which both are sustained as holy. It's inspiring to be reminded of this. —*Naomi Danis*

RUBY OF COCHIN: AN INDIAN JEWISH WOMAN REMEMBERS by Ruby Daniel and Barbara C. Johnson [The Jewish Publication Society], $29.95

A collaborative effort between anthropologist Barbara Johnson and kibbutznik Ruby Daniel, this memoir recounts Daniel's childhood and young adulthood in "Jew Town" of Cochin, India as well as Danie post-1951 experiences on kibbutz Ne Mordechai—home of Naot sandals. (Virtua every member of Daniel's childhood co munity made aliyah.) Written in Danie voice—complete with idiomatic features southern Indian English—her memor include the rich stories she was told as a li girl by her grandparents about 19th centu "Jew Town," the street in Cochin where ancestors settled and built three synagogues

Once in Israel, Daniel is shocked to be only observer of kashrut in a secular kibbu She also struggles against unexpect discrimination—she is repeatedly passed o for a chance to attend cooking school wh Ashkenazi women with less seniority w sent in her place. Daniels reveals troubli comparisons between Israel's racism a India's caste system and "Jew Town's" o conflicts between "white Jews" and "bla Jews." *Ruby of Cochin* is a powerful a important reminder (to American Ashkena Jews) that our tribe is far from homogenous

—*Lisa Lepo*

(continued on page

Ruth's Journey: A Survivor's Memoir

by Ruth Glasberg Gold

"Ruth Gold proves that the heart broken into a thousand pieces can be broken yet more. She survived the hells of the 20th century to write this harrowing, powerful book. But for an accident of time, I could have been one of those Romanian Jews slaughtered in the night of Transnistria. I was born later. My mother had survived. But the place was the same: Romania, Ukraine, Europe. And the unbearable insanity that shattered Ruth's world lives on there in new ethnic hatreds. Read this book: it is filled with the stubborn light of the (barely describable) truth."—**Andrei Codrescu**

"On March 6, 1944, about two thousand orphans were rescued from Romanian concentration camps in Transnistria-Ukraine. I was one of them." So begins Ruth Gold's memoir, a story that illuminates and transcends survival. In 1941, eleven-year-old Ruth witnessed the death of her father, only brother, and mother—all within three weeks—in Bershad, the largest and most infamous of more than 100 concentration camps in Transnistria. This geographic area, almost forgotten in Holocaust accounts, eventually became the graveyard of nearly 250,000 other Jews.

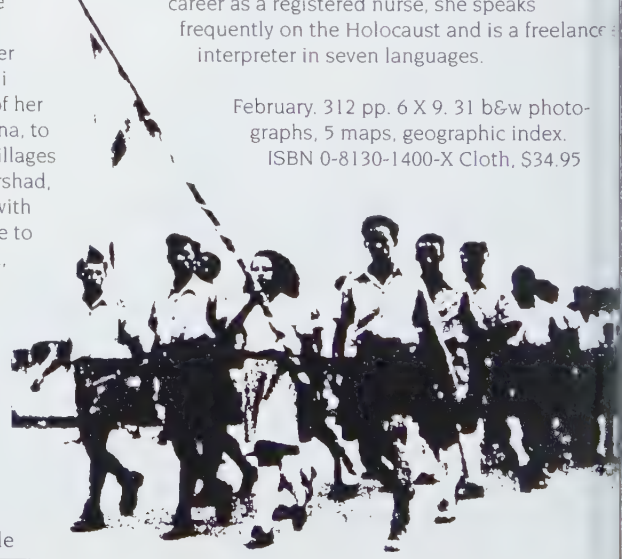
Surviving through a series of foster homes, makeshift orphanages, and refugee camps, Gold fled postwar Romania for Palestine. After the birth of Israel in 1948, Ruth participated in the building of a kibbutz in the Judean Hills near Jerusalem. She became the commune medic and later studied nursing. Marriage took her to Colombia and thence to Miami

In 1988, following the death of her husband, she returned to Bukovina, to her hometown, Czernowitz, the villages she knew, and to the camp at Bershad, hoping to find a way to connect with her childhood and to pay homage to the victims of the camps. Instead, she found dilapidated cemeteries, unmarked mass graves, and a wall of silence that shrouded the massacre of Jews in the region.

Combining historical events with intensely personal narrative, Ruth Gold's book is a memorial to the Jews of Transnistria

Ruth Glasberg Gold cofounded the American Branch of the Women's International Zionist Organization (WIZO) in 1982 and in 1990 began a Child Survivors of the Holocaust support group, the first in Florida. Retired from her long career as a registered nurse, she speaks frequently on the Holocaust and is a freelance interpreter in seven languages.

February. 312 pp. 6 X 9. 31 b&w photographs, 5 maps, geographic index.
ISBN 0-8130-1400-X Cloth, $34.95



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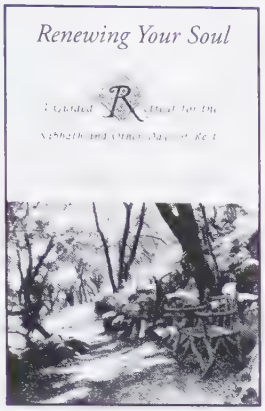

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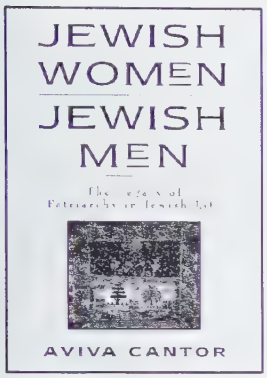

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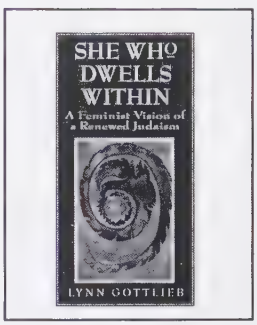

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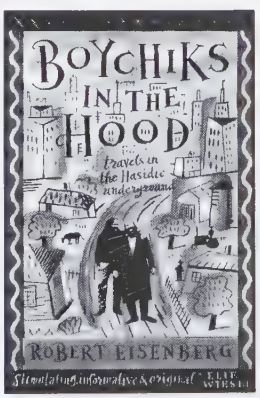

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This hip, respectful travelogue of "the Hasidic underground" reveals the religious experience, ceremony, and tradition of a surprisingly rich and quirky world.
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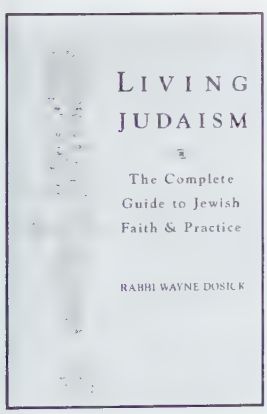

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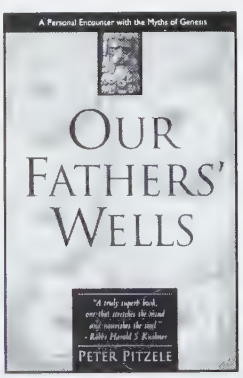

Our Fathers' Wells
Peter Pitzele
In his quest for spiritual renewal, a university professor wrestles with the patriarchal myths of Genesis.
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Rachel Calof's Story

Jewish Homesteader on the Northern Plains

Rachel Calof
Edited by J. Sanford Rikoon

"A moving memoir of an unusual Jewish immigrant experience: homesteading in North Dakota around the turn of the century. . . . This is a profile in courage, the story of how a woman with ingenuity, determination, and faith in God and herself survived—and eventually prospered." ***—Kirkus Reviews***

"In 1894, the 18-year-old Calof, a Russian Jew, was shipped to the U.S. to marry an unknown man and stake a homesteading claim with him in North Dakota. She later set down her memories of that time in fluid prose that occasionally reveals a biting sense of humor. Although her circumstances were often pathetic, Calof never is. . . . an essay by J. Sanford Rikoon on the phenomenon of Jewish farm settlements provides fascinating background." ***—Publishers Weekly***

". . . a powerful and often inspirational tome to the human spirit. . . . the strength of her will and the nobility of her struggle come shining through. Her story is a quintessential American story, and one that all of us can benefit from reading." ***—Booklist***

In 1894, eighteen-year-old Rachel Bella Kahn traveled from Russia to the U.S. for an arranged marriage to Abraham Calof. Her memoir focuses on her life between 1894 and 1904, when she and her husband carved out a life as North Dakota homesteaders. Under harsh and primitive conditions, Calof persevered, drawing on a humor and resolve that is everywhere apparent in her narrative.

176 pages, 9 b&w photos, paper $12.95
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RACHEL CALOF'S STORY: JEWISH HOMESTEADER ON THE NORTHERN PLAINS by Rachel Bella Calof [Indiana University Press], $20 Hardcover, $12.95, Paperback.

This is no *Little House on the Prairie*. A Jewish immigra homesteader in the newly formed state of North Dakota at the turn of th century, Rachel Calof gives us a very different picture of pioneer life the Northern plains. In 1894, Rachel Bella Kahn elected to leave her li as a poor orphan in Russia in favor of an arranged marriage to Abraha Calof. Upon meeting her fiancé, she agreed to travel with him to th frontier, where most of his (also immigrant) family already lived, "to ava [them]selves of the offer of free land." Rachel gives us telling descriptio of the one room shacks in which the families lived (and which in som winters two families were obliged to share not only with each other b with their livestock as well); of the primitive conditions under which s had to give birth; of her quarrels with members of her husband's famil Throughout all her ordeals, she "stood shoulder-to-shoulder" with h husband, and maintained a sense of dignity and a sense of humor.

Although she had little formal education, she writes with a clear, almo poetic voice and a shrewd sense of satire. Her own story is accompanied b an epilogue by her son, Jacob Calof, and academic essays by J. Sanfo Rikoon and Elizabeth Jameson. Like Gluckel of Hameln, writing thr centuries earlier, Rachel Bella Calof's autobiography is an inspiration f the strength, independence, and intelligence her life exemplifies.

–Karen Bekk

KOL ISHAH

(continued from page 7)

law, psychology, and medicine, where the professional is in a position power over the client. The new legislation hopes to make sexual harassme in the service sector a civil offense, allowing the victim to claim damages.

Last year in an unprecedented case, Dr. Ellie Falach, a psychologi was convicted of having sex with his female patients as part of tho treatment. His appeal was not accepted and he is spending four years jail. Successful cases like these are exactly what women need to co forward, Benzimen said.

The legislation has met some opposition from people who are worri that the sexual harassment issue will become obtrusive to the bas friendliness of Israeli culture, leading to "Americanization" of the iss But Dayan is quick to quell these fears. "Israel is a friendly, inform society and we don't want to stop this. People should be allowed to s 'honey' or engage in innocent courting at work. I'm talking abo situations where women make their case clear and are threatened with t loss of their job."

What about reverse sexual harassment? The legislation is worded in bo genders. But as of yet no men have come forward. Nili Nimrod, from t Red Crisis Woman's Center in Tel Aviv, gives two reasons: women aren't power positions as much; and sexual advances are less threatening to men.

But the laws are useless if women are afraid to come forward. Accordi to Dayan, education is needed now more than legislation. Women don't fe safe enough to complain. The Israel Women's Network is trying to chan this by implementing anonymous hotlines for people on the receiving end sexual harassment. The hotline is open on Monday and Wednesd evenings, and slowly the number of calls are increasing. In 1994 the cen received almost 200 calls, up from 64 calls in 1993. "There is not sudden

re sexual harassment, women just have re awareness," Itharow said. The center o produces literature and works to educate police, army, and employers.

"We need employers to feel it's their blem. At this time there are no [sexual assment] policies in Israeli companies." nzimen feels this will come only if ployees are shaken into action. "We need he kind of Clarence Thomas procedure to ng it into the news."

One woman is trying to shake employers o action offering workshops on sexual assment. Rocky Feldsman, an immigrant n the US, started offering her programs nost two years ago and has given rkshops in Israel for 2000 people. Her ents include the Police, The Jewish ency, the Israeli Management Institute (a vernment consulting agency) and versities, to name a few. Before moving srael, she gave the same workshops in the , and programs like hers are in use in 54% US companies. Why then, in Israel, have private companies agreed yet to take it? ey are scared to take it," Feldsman said. ey admit there's sexual harassment but to scared to do anything about it. Israeli iety rarely works on a preventive outlook. y work very short term and are not adept seeing that if you have a happy labor ce, you will be more productive and ryone gets more money."

Still, the lack of private companies ticipating in the workshop remains a appointment to Feldsman. "The idea of workshop is to build a framework bling the company to receive sexual assment complaints and deal with them the harasser. This is far more effective t the victim going to the police," dsman said.

The Israeli definition of harassment refers the harassment of an employee by a nager. It hasn't yet adopted the broader inition of the US, where harassment urs between colleagues. According to dsman, the management workshop takes ery long time because the whole idea is so v. "The idea that workers don't take such avior as a compliment is alien to the men e. Awareness is in it's infant stages."

—*Miriam Kreinin*

te: In trying to publish this story in the ueli press, the author was told that it was y "for an American audience."

INTERMARRIAGE— the end of the Jewish community?

Exploding many of the myths about intermarriage and the intermarried, Ellen Jaffe McClain argues that recent changes in American society actually have the potential to make intermarriage less of a threat to American Jewry.

"The best account I know of what has gone wrong, but what can be made right, in American Judaism. She writes about love with love."
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Rebecca Goldstein's *The Mind-Body Problem*, *Dark Sister*, and *Strange Attractors* are available in paperback from Penguin.

In bookstores from Viking

*Maureen Howard

Our Own Lives

On the Holocaust and its aftermath: For a newsletter, The Hidden Child, written by both survivors who were hidden as children and by the children of survivors, please send articles to the editor *Rachelle Goldstein, Hidden Child Foundation, ADL, 823 United Nations Plaza, New York, NY 10017; (212)885-7900.*

Healing Legacies is a slide registry for art and writing by women who've had breast cancer. You may submit up to 5 pieces for a collection which is ongoing, and serves as a source for national and local exhibits. Co-sponsored by The Women's Caucus for Art. Registration fee $25. Entry form from *Breast Cancer Action Group, P.O. Box 5605, Burlington, VT 05402.*

***"Ess, bubeleh."* Sayings of Jewish mothers and grandmothers** are being collected in a new anthology. The women quoted--or their famiies who submit *bons mots* on their behalf--will receive a copy on publication. Include address and telephone with submission to Sandra E. Price, 1401West Rovey Ave., Phoenix, AZ 85013. (602)240-2629. Fax (602)279-2027.

Ever had a mystical experience in a Jewish setting or with Jewish content? The author of several books of Judaica and psychology would appreciate hearing from you for research on a book. Confidential replies to *Edward Hoffman, P.O. B. 695, Commack, NY 11725. Fax (516)864-7429.*

AIDS--Preventing and Healing

The Heart of the Matter, a film on AIDS as a women's issue, is one of several films and videos that educate about AIDS, and that are available from *First Run/Icarus Films, 153 Waverly Pl., New York, NY 10014.*

Jewish Resource Guide for AIDS memorials. In the Jewish tradition of remembering loved ones by giving *tzedaka*, this booklet, itself created and printed in memory of Howard Jeffrey Limmer, suggests several worthy projects you can contribute to. *Congregation Beth Simchat Torah, 57 Bethune St., New York, NY 10014; (212)929-9498; fax (212)620-3154.*

The New Moon

Rosh Hodesh Exchange, a quarterly newsletter, publishe articles and artwork by—and interest to—women in Jewish new moon groups around the world. Subscriptions are $18 year. *Rosh Hodesh Exchange 20 Banks St., Somerville, MA 02144. e-mail alevin@ world.std.com*

In Jerusalem on Rosh Hode Join the Women at the Wall, you are in Jerusalem, at 7:00 in the Women's section at the Kotel. The dates of the new moons for 1996 are: Decembe 24, January 22, February 21, March 21, April 19 or 20, Ma 19, June 18, July 17, August Call *Chaia at 02-786416 or 02-882315.*

How We Teach Our Children

Letters Dipped in Honey: Jewish Children's Literature is a catalog based on an exhibit of books from the collection of the late Jean Moldavan. It includes *alef-bet* books, primers and story books since 1830 from the U.S., Eastern Europe, Istanbul, Tunisia and Buenos Aires, and pre-and post State of Israel. The catalog quotes the preface to *"Little Miriam's First Hebrew Lesson Book"* (London, 1871) based on a mother's education of her daughter: "When Miriam first began to learn Hebrew, which was very soon after she had conquered the mysteries of the English alphabet, she took a great distaste to the primer her mamma used, and said it looked like a lesson book, and she was sure she never should learn those ugly words. So Mrs. Less put away the book and taught her to read Hebrew 'all out of her head', as Miriam called it.... For those who would like to learn Hebrew in the loving pleasant way Miriam did, I have written out Mrs. Less's lessons." The 36-page illustrated catalog is $6.50 from *Yeshiva University Museum, 2520 Amsterdam Ave., New York, NY 10033.*

Children's Bibles: Sacred Stories, Eternal Words and Holy Pictures is a catalog of eight centuries of children's Bibles drawn from an exhibit at the Houghton Museum of Harvard Library. A chapter on Jewish children's Bibles describes the first vernacular book of Bible stories for Jewish children—actually written for girls and women—in Stuttgart in 1823. "[Moses Mordecai] Budinger's Bible stories

COURTESY OF RUTH BOTTIGHEIMER

From A Compendious History of the Old and New Testaments. (London, J. Hazard, 1726).

resemble many Protestant Bible stories of his day in that he also omitted Noah's drunken nakedness, deleted Dinah's rape, and avoided sexuality in Joseph's encounter with Potiphar's wife. Other omissions display distinctively kindly characteristics, like not having Lot's wife turn into a pillar of salt." 105 pages, and printed by the curator upon request, for $15.00 plus $1.50 postage: *Ruth B. Bottigheimer, Department of Comparative Studies, SUNY, Stony Brook, NY 11794-3355.*

A Holocaust film for young children. *Another Story* is a 15-minute award-winning allegorical tale for ages 7 and up. Lisa Wood Shapiro, the 23-year-old filmmaker, says she was "confused" by how she had been told

Sisters comfort each other.

about the Holocaust as a child. For purchase info and a study guide: *New Dimension Media, 85803 Lorane Hwy., Eugene OR 97405. (800)288-4456.*

Violence in Jewish Homes

When Love Is Not Enough: Spousal Abuse in Rabbinic and Contemporary Judaism, a revised publication by Rabbi Julie Ringold Spitzer, cites historical religious texts and offers suggestions to rabbis and synagogue professionals on dealing with abuse cases. An appendix includes a sermon, a Sabbath service which focuses on spousal abuse, and healing rituals for Jewish women. $15 plus $3 shipping from *Carolyn Kunin, Women of Reform Judaism, 838 Fifth Ave., New York, NY 10021.*

***Shalom Bayit:* A Jewish Response to Child Abuse and Domestic Violence**, a guide for schools, camps and synagogues in recognizing the problem and developing a response that meets the requirements of the law and supports families in distress. The $18 fee for the guide subsidizes child abuse consultation provided by this joint committee of the Department of Psychology, Lee College of the University of Judaism, and the Jewish Family Service of Los Angeles. *Shalom Bayit Jewish Family Service, 6429 Independence Ave., Woodland Hills, CA 91367.*

A free kit that educates rabbis about family violence provides information to draw upon for sermons and will help rabbis understand and recognize the signs of abuse among their congregants. A list of shelters and other resources is included. *Jewish Women International,* (formerly B'nai B'rith Women),*Program Division, 1828 L St., NW #250, Washington, DC 20036. (202)857-1300.*

A Bibliography of Sources on Sexual and Domestic Violence in the Jewish Community, continually being updated, is $2.50 from the compiler, who is also available for workshops. *Marcia Cohn Spiegel, 4856 Ferncreek Drive, Rolling Hills Estates, CA 90274.* You can also e-mail her with new resources at *MCSpiegel@aol.com.*

istory

ited States Holocaust esearch Institute in ashington, DC, has facilities t include eight departments: ademic Programs, the brary, the Archive, the Photo chive, Oral History, Film d Video, the Wexner arning Center and the njamin and Vladka Meed gistry of Jewish Holocaust rvivors. Reading rooms are en daily from 10 am to 5 pm. r general information call 02)488-6115; fax (202) 479-26; internet research@hmm.org. For information out fellowships, call 02)488-6110.

e Tenth Annual Berkshire nference on the History of omen, with nearly 200 ssions, workshops, and ndtables, will be held June 7- Information from *1996 rkshire Conference, Division Continuing Education, CB 020, Friday Center, niversity of North Carolina at apel Hill, Chapel Hill, NC 599-1020.*

raeli Historiography evisited is the theme of a ecial issue of History & emory: Studies in Represen-ion of the Past, a journal that cuses on the formation of storical consciousness and rticularly the problems of derstanding the National cialist and Fascist epoch and impact on contemporary imagination. $11.75 (includes postage) from *Journals Division, Indiana University Press, 601 North Morton St., Bloomington, IN 47404.*

Life & Art

Jewish short stories from Eastern Europe and Beyond is a new, much publicized series of radio programs featuring stories by 18 modern Jewish writers (among them only three women: Edith Konecky, Cynthia Ozick and Grace Paley). The series was produced and directed largely by women and we hope that the next time round they'll have a budget to retrieve the works of more women that have not yet been translated from the Yiddish. Listen on National Public Radio stations, or order on cassette, $80 plus $5 shipping, from *National Yiddish Book Center at (800)973-7437.*

Actress Rhea Perlman reading "Good-bye and Good Luck" by Grace Paley

Reclaiming the Past: *A Documentary with Sophie* is a 15-minute video cassette in which actress/oral historian/comedienne Judith Sloan, reenacts, through her three-dimensional character Sophie, the oral histories of older European Jews she collected with the support of an N.E.H. grant. $18 plus $2 shipping from *ear/say, P.O. Box 299, Purchase, NY 10577; (718)729-3668.*

Musical Illuminations of Biblical Women is a concert/lecture series that offers a feminist approach to musical settings about biblical women such as Massenet's "Eve" and Cesar Franck's arrangement of Ruth and Naomi's dialogues. Available in a variety of formats. Contact instructor/performer *Cantor Helen Leneman, 10 Defoe Ct., Rockville, MD 20850;(301)762-6682. Fax (301)762-6025.*

Body Politic

Wear a Women at the Wall T-shirt to keep in mind the unresolved struggle for women's equal rites in Jerusalem. Profits to the International Committee for Women of the Wall, Inc., sizes L and XL, $18 plus $2 shipping from the artist, *Rabbi Jinny Roth Isserow, 1735 Dunwoody Pl., NE, Atlanta GA 30324.*

Post-Beijing: Even if you didn't attend, you can participate now. The Jewish community wants to find out how you and/or your organization will implement plans to improve women's lives, helping to end domestic violence, educational inequities, sexual slavery and government-sanctioned discrimination. Request a form, and send it back to *Jessica Lieberman, Jewish Community Post-Beijing Commitment Form, NJCRAC, 443 Park Ave. South, NY, NY 10016. Fax (212)686-1353.*

The National Jewish Law Students Association, founded in 1983, is now catalysing individual law school JLSA chapters and regional networks. It describes itself as both a mechanism for activism and a forum for promoting a Jewish identity within the legal community. Activities include National Jewish Law Review, National Moot Court Competition, and a monthly newsletter, *"Shalom Aleichem." National Jewish Law Students Association, c/o Boston College Law School, 885 Centre St. #L122, Newton, MA 02159. e-mail: kerberg@cleo.bc.edu*

Becoming a Jew

If you are considering conversion to Judaism, or want to learn more about what's involved, you can receive information and free literature from the Rabbinical Assembly, the organization of Conservative rabbis, by dialing (800)ASK-N-LEA(RN) or (800)275-6532.

—compiled by Naomi Danis

SPILLING OUT WINE: A NEW WEDDING BLESSING

BY DEBORAH EISENBACH-BUDNER

In the course of planning our wedding, my husband Steven and I looked closely at Jewish wedding prayers and blessings. We came face to face with a painful contradiction between our love for our gay and lesbian friends and relatives, and our attachment to Jewish wedding liturgy—which is blatantly heterosexist.

In an attempt to reconcile our feelings of emotional (and ethical) conflict, we wrote the following text for our wedding. We felt that it was important to both affirm and challenge Judaism:

The traditional Seven Blessings—recited at all Jewish weddings—compare the joy of every bride and groom to the primordial wholeness of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. These blessings express the idea that each union between a man and a woman brings us closer to the time of Redemption. The blessings conclude with the drinking of a full cup of wine to symbolize joy of union.

We feel that we can only drink a full cup of joy when the un of all lovers is celebrated. We will only feel a sense of wholer when same-sex couples are also able to enjoy the legal, social religious privileges that are being extended to us on this holy day

We have therefore added an eighth blessing to the traditio Seven Blessings. Akin to taking ten drops of wine out of our glas during the Passover seder when we recite the Ten Plagu (acknowledging that all losses require our empathy), we dimir our full cup of joy in recognition that the world is not yet compl The added eighth blessing reminds us that as partners in Creat we must strive toward a garden in which there is a place for loving relationships.

[The following blessing is sung after the traditional Seven Blessings. At its conclusion, bride or groom pours out some wine on the ground. Then both drink from the cup, as is traditional.]

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵנוּ מְקוֹר הַחַיִּים שֶׁהִגִּיעָנוּ
לְאַהֲבַת נֶפֶשׁ שֶׁל יוֹנָתָן וְדָוִד, לְחֶסֶד שֶׁל רוּת
וְנָעֳמִי וּלְאַחוּר שֶׁל יַעֲקֹב וְרָחֵל. מְהֵרָה יְיָ
אֱלֹהֵנוּ יִשָּׁמַע וְיֵחָגֵג בְּשַׁעֲרֵי עָרֵינוּ קוֹלוֹת כָּל
הָאֲהוּבִים וְשִׁירֵי כָּל הָרֵעוֹת. מְהֵרָה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ
נִשְׁתֶּה בֶּלֶנוּ מְלוֹא הַכּוֹס רָנָּה. בְּרוּכָה אַתְּ יְיָ
מְקוֹר אַהֲבָה.

You are blessed, Adonai our God, Source of Life,
who enables us to strive toward the devotion of Jonathan and David,
the life-sharing of Ruth and Naomi,
and the commitment of Jacob and Rachel.
May the time come soon when the voices of all lovers,
the music of all friendships, will rise up to be heard and
celebrated in the gates of our cities.
May the time come soon when we can all drink a full cup of joy.
Blessed are You, Source of Love.

Deborah Eisenbach-Budner works as a Jewish educator in the Boston area. She especially enjoys studying and teaching about Jewish women's history, Judaism and sexuality, and bisexual, gay and lesbian perspectives. If you want to know more about the eighth blessing contact Deborah Eisenbach-Budner at: Temple Shir Tikva, POB 265, Wayland, MA, 01778; 508-358-5312, ext. 12.